Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029

| Position | Innovate | Collaborate | Nurture | Grow |

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1.1. Summary and Context

The Lisburn & Castlereagh Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 is a strategic roadmap for raising the profile of Lisburn & Castlereagh as a distinguished, sustainable, and socially inclusive tourism destination with a vibrant community spirit at its heart.

The ambition of this strategy is to position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a renowned tourism destination with a unique identity and unparalleled experiences like Royal Hillsborough – Northern Ireland's only designated Royal residence. The purpose of this plan is to maximise social and economic benefits for tourism providers and communities across urban and rural areas in city, town, villages and hamlets.

To achieve success a twofold approach is recommended that applies equal value to

1.	**Infrastructural investment and development:** i.e., the curation of high-quality tangible infrastructure that has been a core responsibility for Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team to date and will remain so for the future.
	
	Examples:
	• Securing +£26million investment for the development of Royal Hillsborough as a world-class heritage village
	• Installation of the Digital sculpture trail in Hillsborough Forest: ten giant sculptures created by leading artists that encourage exploration supported by an augmented reality digital app
	• Installation of the Guess How Much I Love You trail: celebrating the author and Lisburn resident, Sam McBratney who wrote the international bestseller *Guess How Much I Love You*
	
	Looking to the future, this will encompass further projects such as
	• attracting investment for the development of quality accommodation
	• scoping the potential for
	  - new tourism product: e.g., Hillsborough Castle & Gardens, Ulster Aviation Society, Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB
	  - an annual tourism event to grow domestic and international visitors e.g., a food-themed festival, Christmas markets

2.	**Tourism industry and destination development:** this is essential for
	• maximising social and economic opportunities
	• sustainable tourism development
	• achieving a return for investments made on tangible infrastructure
	• meeting the expectations of the visitor who seeks to forge a deep connection with a destination and its people
	
	Activity encompasses:
	• Building a robust collaborative framework
	  - between Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's tourism team and local tourism and hospitality providers
	  - across Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry
	  - between Lisburn & Castlereagh and external stakeholders that can support the destination including Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland

- **Investing in new experience development:** curating experiences delivered by local providers that reveal the story of people and place

- **Championing tourism product and experiences that are unique to Lisburn & Castlereagh:** e.g., Ulster Aviation Society, the Linen Museum, Royal Hillsborough, visitor experiences that showcase diverse aspects of the destination's story e.g., scenic beauty, food, linen design

- **Enterprise development:** supporting tourism businesses to maximise economic opportunities

> This twofold approach to tourism development will require careful consideration so that the brief Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team is responsible for throughout 2024-2029 and beyond a) has the full support of council and b) is appropriately resourced to achieve social and economic success along with the growth targets set out in this plan.

This plan follows the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 (the first tourism strategy coordinated by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council since its establishment as a local authority in Northern Ireland in 2015) and is set out in two key parts:

- **Strategic Analysis:** a summary of the research and outcomes that inform the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029
- **Action Plan 2024-2029:** defining the strategic pillars and associated actions for the next five years

Across these two parts, the plan has three sections:

1. Summary and Context
2. Where We Are Now
3. The Way Forward: Action Plan 2024-2029

1.2. Vision and Value Proposition

The vision statement and value proposition form the foundation for all activities conducted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council in collaboration with tourism businesses, key stakeholders and partners.

While the vision statement summarises the destination's ambition, the value proposition is created from the visitor's perspective.

Strategic plans, annual plans, and actions must align to the vision statement and value proposition. They are ideally used when engaging with tourism stakeholders and procuring services such a PR, marketing and advertising so that the destination's tourism offering, aims, and objectives are understood.

The vision statement and value proposition have been created following consultation with Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry, communities, and key stakeholders. These are working documents and can change over time as the destination evolves and as the external environment changes.

1.2.1. Vision statement

The vision of this strategy is to

Position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a leading tourism destination distinguished by innovative tourism experiences that are unparalleled in Ireland, places of immense natural beauty, a rich built and cultural heritage, a vibrant food and drink scene and a deep sense of community that champions social inclusion bound by a collaborative spirit and a sustainable ethos that benefits people, planet and pocket at its heart.

1.2.2. Value proposition

Stretching from the shores of Lough Neagh in the west to the hills above Dundonald in the east, and from the Belfast Hills in the north to the source of the River Lagan in the south, Lisburn & Castlereagh is bordered by six of Northern Ireland's 11 district council areas within easy reach of Belfast and Dublin.

Home to Hillsborough Castle and Gardens (Northern Ireland's only designated *Royal* residence) and the Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB (Northern Ireland's only Regional Park), Lisburn & Castlereagh is unparalleled as a tourism destination in Ireland.

Characterised by a deep sense of community and a leisurely pace of life where welcoming people have time to engage in conversation across urban and rural neighbourhoods, an annual calendar of experiences and events inspire visitors to explore:

- **Culture and Heritage:** from being the home of Royal Hillsborough village with its remarkable Georgian architecture, art galleries and stately homes to the Ulster Aviation Society with 30+ historic aircrafts and craft design ranging from handmade linen to fine art ceramics

- **Food and Drink:** a celebrated destination for food and drink with gastro pubs, restaurants and farmer's markets that champion local produce complemented by experiences in private homes, cookery schools as well as Hinch Distillery and Hilden Brewery that are beloved locally

- **Adventure and Activities:** a haven for walkers and hikers - Lagan towpath walk connects Lisburn to Belfast; biking, boating, falconry, horse-racing and horse-riding, parkland golf courses, and Ireland's largest aqua park at Let's Go Hydro

- **Events and Festivals:** year-round community and large-scale events include the Down Royal Racing Festival that takes place annually in November - with a heritage dating back to 1865, this racecourse is the only one in Northern Ireland to host jump and flat racing

Complimented by restaurants, cafes, bars and accommodation from glamping, self-catering cottages, B&Bs and guesthouses to stately homes, castles and hotels, Lisburn & Castlereagh is naturally suited to domestic and international leisure visitors including individuals and groups, couples, families, soft adventurers, golfers, inter-generational travellers and enthusiasts of nature, culture & heritage, food & drink, and the great outdoors.

For business tourism, Lisburn & Castlereagh is home to outdoor spaces and indoor venues including the Eikon Exhibition Centre (Northern Ireland's largest events venue with 10,000 SQMs of indoor event space on a 55-acre site), historic buildings and hotels for meeting, conference, events and incentive groups from 10 to 10,000 delegates.

As a collaborative and responsible community, we welcome everyone who shares our commitment to social inclusion and a sustainable ethos that benefits people, planet and pocket.

Castlereagh Hills Golf Course

1.3. Creating the Plan

The scope requested of the Lisburn & Castlereagh Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 is:

- provide strategic guidance to
  - raise the profile of the district as a tourism destination
  - achieve economic growth that benefits the district's tourism businesses and local economy
  - leverage tourism to raise pride and identity, generating social and wellbeing benefits
  - provide guidance on offline and online marketing

- make recommendations about the opportunity to develop new tourism products and experiences

- review the former Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, noting that the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 requires a fresh approach in the context of a post Covid-19 and Brexit era

- identify potential sources of funding to enable implementation of this Tourism Strategy

- provide guidance about how to maximise the role and the potential of the district's Visitor Servicing function, analysing gaps and new opportunities (e.g., digitalisation)

Guided by this direction, this plan is informed by consultations, an analysis of the provision of Visitor Services, a product audit, in-destination site visits and desk research:

- **Consultations:**
  - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) officers
  - LCCC tourism and hospitality businesses
  - LCCC elected representatives
  - Tourism Northern Ireland
  - Tourism Ireland
  - Visit Belfast: leisure and business tourism representatives
  - Professional travel buyers (leisure and business tourism) in Ireland and abroad, including the ITOA and ETOA associations
  - Disability Federation Ireland
  - Ulster University Economic Policy Centre
  - Climate action experts
  - Leave No Trace
  - Independent data intelligence and international benchmarking organisations

- **In-destination site visits:** an in-person assessment of signature tourism products that are unique to the Lisburn & Castlereagh district including:
  - Hillsborough Castle and Gardens: Northern Ireland's royal residence
  - Ulster Aviation Society: 30+ historic aircrafts and exhibits celebrating Northern Ireland's aviation heritage, expertly curated by passionate volunteers

- **Down Royal racecourse:** the only racecourse in Northern Ireland to host both jump and flat racing, with a heritage dating back to 1865
- **Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB (4,200 acres):** Northern Ireland's only Regional Park with rich biodiversity and heritage
- **Maze Long Kesh:** a 347-acre site that is home to the Ulster Aviation Society and the 5,000m2 EIKON exhibition venue and exhibition facility renowned for hosting events such as the Balmoral Show (Northern Ireland's largest agri-food event with +100,000 visitors in May annually)
- **Places to dine, visit and stay:**
  - places to dine including gastro pubs and restaurants
  - places that offer food & drink experiences with tours and tastings such as distilleries and breweries
  - places to stay: including hotels and guest houses

- **Product Audit:** an analysis of existing tourism products and experiences to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities under the following categories:
  - Natural assets: places of natural beauty
  - Experiences: culture & heritage; adventure & activities; food & drink; wellness and sustainability
  - Accommodation providers
  - Events and festivals
  - Exclusive Venues

- **Visitor Services review:**
  - site visits and consultations were conducted with Visitor Services teams in Dublin, Belfast, Newry Mourne Down and Derry ~ Londonderry
  - reports and visitor services models from Ireland, Scandinavia and Germany were studied
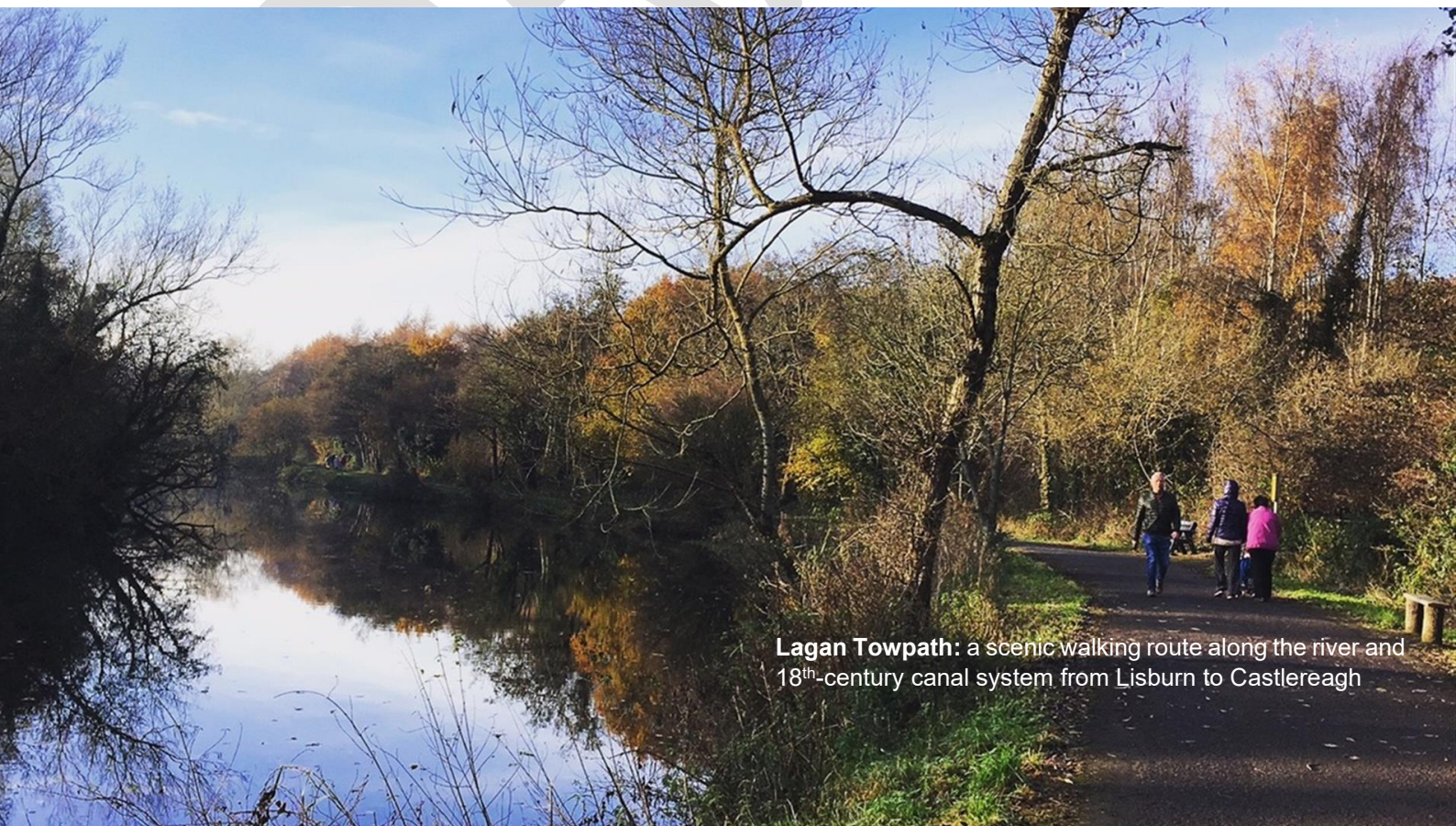

Lagan Towpath: a scenic walking route along the river and 18th-century canal system from Lisburn to Castlereagh

- **Desk Research:** reports and analyses relevant to LCCC's tourism strategy including regional Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) strategies, national strategies and independently published reports

This plan including all recommendations and actions aligns with regional and national policies and strategies:

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC):	National Strategies and Policies	Visit Belfast related reports	Independent reports
- LCCC Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 - LCCC Community Plan 2017-2032 - LCCC Corporate Plan and Ambitions 2024/2028 - LCCC Interim Corporate Plan 2021-2024 - LCCC Local Development Plan 2032 - Hillsborough Tourism Masterplan - Hillsborough Castle and Heritage Village Outline Business Case June 2021 - Royal Hillsborough Sustainability Report - LCCC Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report 2021-2022	- Tourism NI's Draft Tourism Strategy 2024-2034 - Together Building a United Community Strategy - Rural Needs Act - Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act - Tourism NI 2022-23 operating plan - Tourism NI Annual Report 2020 - Lagan Valley Regional Park Five Year Management Plan 2023-2028 - Tourism Ireland Marketing Plans - Department for the Economy Economic Strategy - Department for the Economy Economic Vision (2024): Good jobs, Regional Balance, Raise Productivity, Net Zero - Department of Culture, Arts and Heritage: A Way Forward - DAERA Northern Ireland Food Strategy	- LCC and Visit Belfast Regional Tourism Partnership 2022-2023 - Visit Belfast Business & Operational Plan 2022-2023 - Visit Belfast Draft Strategy 2024-2027 - Visit Belfast Business Plan 2024	- United Nations Climate Change reports - World Tourism Organisation (UN Tourism) reports - Booking.com Sustainable Travel Report 2023 - Disability Federation of Ireland Advocacy Plan 2024-2026 - Future.TI (Destination Germany) 2020 - Food NI's *Our Food the Power of Good*

Ulster Aviation Society
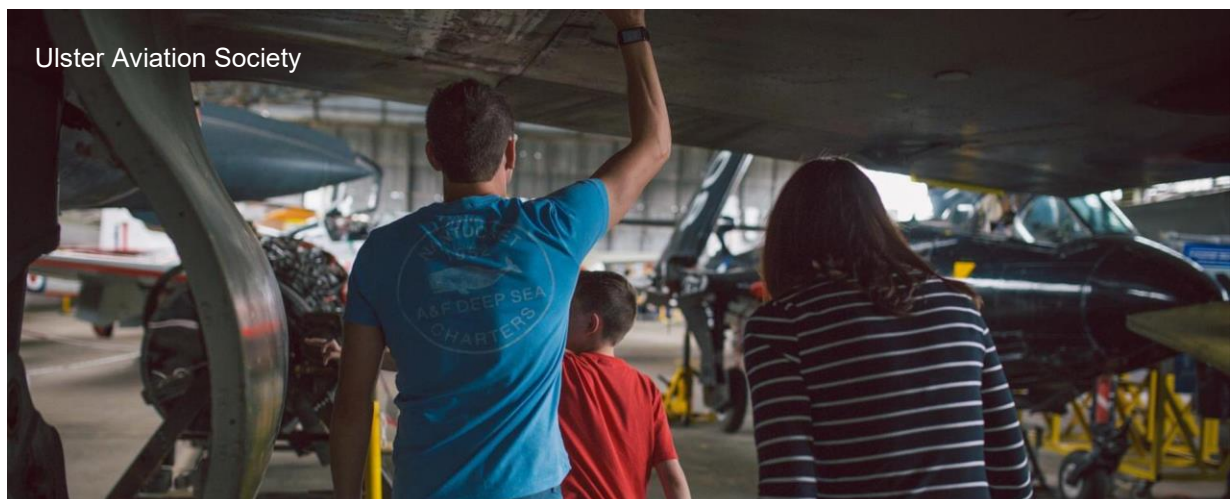
1.4. Tourism Priorities: past and future

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council has been extremely successful in the development of tourism infrastructure for which the council's tourism team has been instrumental. Examples of high profile projects:

- **+£26 million investment secured for Royal Hillsborough village:** home to Hillsborough Castle and Gardens and Hillsborough Forest, this investment will support the development of Royal Hillsborough as a world-class heritage village.

  The funds represent a combined investment made by Belfast Region City Deal, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Historic Royal Palaces (HRP)

- **Completion of tourism infrastructure projects:**
  - Digital sculpture trail in Hillsborough Forest: encompassing ten giant sculptures created by leading artists that encourage exploration supported by an augmented reality digital app
  - Guess How Much I Love You trail: celebrating the author and lifelong Lisburn resident, Sam McBratney who wrote the international bestseller *Guess How Much I Love You* in 1994 (selling more than 55 million copies worldwide), this Public Art and Literature Trail is accessible through a digital app or offline map

- **+£52 million investment for Dundonald International Ice Bowl:** development of a state of the art facility featuring an Olympic-sized ice rink, 24-lane bowling alley and catering facilities

  Opening in 2026, it is estimated that the ice bowl will welcome more than 700,000 visitors annually by contrast with existing annual visitor numbers of 500,000

Other notable achievements following the inception of the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 include

Elevating the food and drink offering: a key theme in the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022	• raising the profile of the rich food and drink heritage and innovative producers as a primary motivator for visiting the Lisburn & Castlereagh district that is home to gastro pubs, restaurants, and quality artisan industries • developing an annual programme of farmers markets alongside food & drink related themed events • raising the profile of local destinations that champion quality Northern Ireland food and drink produce: e.g., the Speciality Food Fair that takes places in August annually in the Moira village
Events and festivals	Supporting the development of an annual programme of community and larger scale events across the district to drive visitor footfall e.g., • Balmoral Show that takes place in the Eikon Exhibition Centre Lisburn, welcoming more than 120,000 visitors in May annually • Down Royal Festival of Racing in November annually
Integrated Marketing campaigns	A key theme in the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, successes include delivering an annual Integrated Marketing Campaign to increase awareness and footfall to the district

Looking to the future: going forward the tourism team will continue to focus on the above outlined activity to include

- positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a leading destination for food and drink
- supporting events, festivals and farmers markets
- delivering integrated marketing campaigns
- tourism infrastructure development: ensuring that the management of any such projects is handed over to the appropriate operational experts upon completion.

Additionally, to maximise social and economic opportunities Lisburn & Castlereagh will place a priority focus upon

- building a robust collaborative framework that connects
  - tourism industry business providers: developing partnership opportunities
  - Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry with the local community
  - Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team with local tourism business providers and all stakeholders that can support the development of this tourism destination including Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast

- curating tourism experiences that share the story of people and place

- enterprise development: delivering training and mentoring supports that can help local tourism providers maximise opportunities individually and collectively

- embedding a culture of sustainable and regenerative tourism and social inclusion within all activity

- promoting Lisburn & Castlereagh as a leading tourism destination with a unique identity and unparalleled experiences

- maximising opportunities that can deliver a return on investment for the destination's tourism infrastructure projects

As this activity brings increased responsibilities, a refocus will be required to appropriately resource the Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team to achieve success and the growth targets outlined in this plan.

The requirement for this renewed focus is evident throughout the Key Findings outlined in the following section.

1.5. Key Findings

This section highlights the key outcomes that have emerged to inform the growth target and strategic priorities in this plan under the following ten headings

- I. Positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a tourism destination
- II. Travelling across boundaries and understanding the visitor's perspective
- III. Regional Partnership: Visit Belfast and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
- IV. An assessment of the tourism offering and destination
- V. Lough Neagh Partnership
- VI. Dispersion across all tourism businesses and the destination
- VII. Sustainability, regeneration, climate action and biodiversity
- VIII. Placing inclusion, collaboration and community at the heart of tourism development
- IX. Supporting livelihoods and the economy: commercial and data analytics development
- X. The future of Visitor Services in Lisburn & Castlereagh

I. Positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a tourism destination

From the outset of the consultation process, the debate arose among tourism businesses about whether Lisburn & Castlereagh is a) a tourism destination with its own identity and character or b) a suburban destination that is an extension of Belfast.

This uncertainty about the positioning of the Lisburn & Castlereagh district manifests in council reports too. For example, the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Interim Corporate Plan 2021-2024 states that *"there can be a perception of Lisburn & Castlereagh as a suburb of Belfast rather than somewhere to live and work."*

> Position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a tourism destination with its own unique character that offers the convenience of being accessible to other places, including Belfast

Ultimately the balance of opinion landed on positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination with its own character that offers the added convenience of being easily accessible to Belfast. The strong sentiment expressed is that the Lisburn & Castlereagh district is differentiated by

- **a slower pace of life**: described as a destination "at ease," an ideal place for visitors to unwind in the company of welcoming people who have the time to engage in conversation

- **a deep sense of community:** this aligns with the sentiment of Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan 2017-2032: "*Local identity is important. People identify strongly with the towns, villages, and neighbourhoods they live in…*"

- **an accessible geography:** with a broad variety of experiences possible within easy commuting distance a) within the district and b) outside the district: e.g., it is possible to walk from Lisburn to Belfast along the Lagan towpath in 2-3 hours

Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry has asked for ambition, calling out the potential to achieve more by increasing the profile of the destination's unique tourism offering across the full breadth of the geography in urban and rural areas. The Lisburn & Castlereagh Community

Plan 2017/2032 in turn acknowledges the potential to achieve more, stating that the tourism opportunity has not yet reached its' full potential and is still "underdeveloped."

Through consultations, stakeholders have emphasised how this is a compelling, must-visit destination, particularly for

- families: with lots to do from Lets Go Hydro to outdoor activities and forest trails

- culture and heritage enthusiasts: 745 archaeological sites and monuments, six Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, Ulster's rich industrial heritage in fine linen

- food and drink enthusiasts: with vibrant farmer's markets (e.g., in the historic Royal Hillsborough village), excellent places to eat from pubs to restaurants, Hinch Distillery and Hilden Brewery (Ireland's oldest independent brewery)

- soft adventure enthusiasts: from parkland golf courses with idyllic views to breathtaking landscapes for walking and cycling such as the Lagan Valley Regional Park (4,200 acres and 11 miles of riverbank), Hillsborough Forest and open parkland at Moira Demesne

- luxury tourism: home to Royal Hillsborough - renowned for striking architecture, old-world charm and Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, the destination is a natural fit for visitors who appreciate exclusive experiences

- business tourism: a prime location to meet the needs of corporate meetings, conferences, incentives, and events:
  - Eikon Exhibition Centre: Northern Ireland's largest events venue with 10,000 SQMs of indoor event space on a 55-acre site
  - Hillsborough Castle and Gardens
  - Unique venues such as Hilden Brewery and Hinch Distillery
  - outdoor spaces such as Lagan Valley AONB (4,200 acres)
  - in-destination hotels: while the supply of accommodation in Lisburn & Castlereagh is limited, additional rooms can be sourced from neighbouring areas such as Belfast

II. Travelling across boundaries and understanding the visitor's perspective

When positioning the tourism offering of any destination, it is important to be aware that visitors from the domestic and international marketplace are not concerned with district council or geographical boundaries. Instead, they travel from one compelling location to another in search of memorable experiences that reflect the story (traditions, customs, values, way of life) of local communities.

In the context of Lisburn & Castlereagh it is essential to be mindful of this given the district's

- **location:** stretching from the shores of Lough Neagh in the west to the hills above Dundonald in the east, and from the Belfast Hills in the north to the source of the River Lagan in the south, the district is bordered by six of Northern Ireland's council areas
  - Belfast: population of approximately 348,000
  - Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon: population of approximately 220,000
  - Newry Mourne and Down: population of approximately 182,000
  - Ards and North Down: population of approximately 164,000
  - Mid Ulster: population of approximately 151,000
  - Antrim and Newtownabbey: population of approximately 146,000

- **regional partnership:** a formal agreement whereby Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council works in partnership with Visit Belfast to support the promotion of tourism businesses in Lisburn & Castlereagh

Within this framework, the strategic approach for Lisburn & Castlereagh needs to
- focus upon raising the profile of the district's tourism offering so that local businesses (individually and collectively) stand out to win domestic and international visitors and maximise dwell time
- maximise opportunities for Lisburn & Castlereagh by
    - targeting the 1.3+ million people (70% of Northern Ireland's population) who live in Lisburn & Castlereagh (population of approximately 149,900) and within 6 neighbouring district council areas (combined population of approximately 1.2+ million including 348,000 in Belfast) for day trips and short stays
    - targeting the wider Northern Ireland marketplace
    - targeting the Republic of Ireland marketplace, noting that County Dublin (with a population of 1.4+ million) is within easy reach of the district
    - targeting international market opportunities in markets prioritised by Tourism Ireland: North America, Great Britain, France and Germany.
- work in partnership with Visit Belfast to maximise opportunities

Noting that Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism offering is dually promoted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council under the Visit Lisburn & Castlereagh brand and by Visit Belfast under the Belfast Plus brand, the industry in Lisburn & Castlereagh has asked for promotion of the tourism offering in their destination to be amplified across domestic and international markets over the next five years. The success of this activity can be measured against the growth targets outlined in this plan.

> Leverage Lisburn & Castlereagh's prime location and strategic partnerships to maximise opportunities via the local, national and international marketplaces

III. Regional Partnership: Visit Belfast and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

The consultation process raised ambiguities about how tourism is promoted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Visit Belfast. Noting that clarity was requested in this regard, the partnership between Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Visit Belfast along with their associated roles are outlined below.

Visit Belfast	Visit Belfast operates as a not-for-profit Destination Marketing Management Organisation (DMMO) supported by Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland to provide marketing, sales and visitor servicing activity with the purpose of delivering on city-wide and national tourism strategies. Visit Belfast's remit is thereby to create and service domestic and international visitors across leisure, business and cruise tourism for - Belfast - Regional tourism partners: bound by a Service Level Agreement, this includes Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council - Destination Northern Ireland - developing an established annual programme of farmers markets alongside food and drink related themed events

	• raising the profile of local destinations that champion quality Northern Ireland food and drink produce: e.g., the Speciality Food Fair that takes places in August annually in the Moira village

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	Lisburn & Castlereagh District Council's tourism team operates at a localised level with priorities encompassing
	
	• development of tourism infrastructure such as
	  - trails: e.g., the Digital sculpture trail in Hillsborough Forest and the Guess How Much I Love You trail
	  - large scale projects: e.g., securing investment and supporting the development of Royal Hillsborough (£26 million) and Dundonald International Ice Bowl (£52 million)
	  - food and drink product offering: e.g., the development of farmer's markets and raising the profile of the diverse quality of places to eat and drink across the district
	
	• promotion of the district's tourism offering: primarily to Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland leisure tourism visitors via digital marketing and in-destination Visitor Services

Regional partnership between Visit Belfast and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Since the Greater Belfast Regional Tourism Partnership was first set up in 2006, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Visit Belfast have engaged in a collaborative partnership bound by a Service Level Agreement whereby Visit Belfast promotes the Lisburn & Castlereagh district via marketing, sales and Visit Belfast-operated visitor services.

Lisburn & Castlereagh is marketed under *Belfast Plus* with the purpose of a) highlighting the district's proximity to Belfast and b) the breadth of experiences and services located here that meet the needs of leisure, business, and cruise tourism visitors.

Under the Belfast Plus brand, activity conducted by Visit Belfast includes

- promotion via
  - Belfast Plus web pages and social media channels
  - Belfast City & Region Guide
- inclusion in targeted marketing campaigns that prioritise the domestic, Republic of Ireland and Great Britain markets
- visitor services across the following locations with dedicated Belfast Plus branding: Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, Belfast International Airport and George Best Belfast City Airport (travel advisory services, literature distribution, event information, ticketing service and accommodation booking)
- Belfast industry engagement programme: raising the profile of the Lisburn & Castlereagh district's tourism offering to generate referral bookings via Belfast-based tourism and hospitality businesses
- Cruise Belfast website and Cruise Terminal Visitor Servicing: March-October
- Visit Belfast Business Events website and conference guide
- representation at consumer and trade shows for leisure and business tourism in Ireland and internationally

The future opportunity, metrics and neighbourhood tourism

Looking to the future, by working in partnership with Visit Belfast there is an opportunity for Lisburn & Castlereagh to leverage Belfast's brand recognition as a tourism destination and Northern Ireland's capital city to a) achieve measurable promotional and economic opportunities for tourism businesses and b) increase dwell time in Lisburn & Castlereagh.

Noting that Visit Belfast's Business Plan 2024-2025 has set a KPI to achieve 780,000 visits across overnight trips (250,000), day trips (200,000), cruise tourism (296,000) and corporate delegates (24,000), it is recommended that an updated Service Level Agreement (SLA) with clear objectives, actions and KPIs are agreed for Lisburn & Castlereagh over a defined period (e.g., 3 or 5 years) and that the success of this SLA is assessed via agreed KPIs and metrics.

Visit Belfast's focus on neighbourhood tourism

Within the SLA, the context for "neighbourhood tourism" outlined as a strategic focus in Visit Belfast's Strategy 2024-2027 also needs consideration. As neighbourhood tourism champions engagement with local people and places, this opportunity is especially relevant for Lisburn & Castlereagh with a variety of neighbourhoods across urban and rural areas.

Notably, the importance of *"neighbourhoods"* where *"local identity is important"* is widely referenced across Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council plans, including the Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan 2017/2032.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council: maximising opportunities

To maximise opportunities via the Visit Belfast collaboration and beyond this collaboration, this plan recommends that the council

- regularly engages with Visit Belfast to ensure that agreed actions and associated KPIs are achieved, strengths are optimised and challenges are addressed

> Continue to partner with Visit Belfast, alongside targeting opportunities at a local, regional and national level

- continues with the integrated marketing campaigns delivered by Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team that target Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland visitors
- proactively develops partnerships with key tourism stakeholders including Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland
- proactively develops partnerships with professional travel buyers across leisure and business tourism, noting that the buyers consulted for this plan welcomed learning more about Lisburn & Castlereagh as a tourism destination
- actively engages with local tourism businesses to foster a culture of cross collaboration across the destination
- develops alliances that can benefit Lisburn & Castlereagh, for example with Visit Belfast visitor services representatives and Belfast-based accommodation providers that can refer visitors
- reviews targeted marketing campaigns conducted by Visit Belfast that prioritise the domestic, Republic of Ireland and Great Britain markets to
  - assess the opportunity for Lisburn & Castlereagh
  - ensure that duplications across Lisburn & Castlereagh and Visit Belfast's marketing activity are avoided
  - measure the success of Visit Belfast-led campaigns for Lisburn & Castlereagh via robust data collation and analysis
- reviews initiatives such as those provided by Visit Belfast, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland to determine opportunities for Lisburn & Castlereagh

IV.   An assessment of the tourism offering and destination

To ensure that the Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism offering is communicated with clarity over the next six years, the key categories for promotion have been identified as

- **natural assets:** places of natural beauty (e.g., Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB) and hub communities across the district's urban and rural landscapes: city, town, villages and hamlets

- **culture and heritage:**
  - experiences and services that share the story of people and place
  - tangible heritage: e.g., Hillsborough Castle and Gardens
  - cultural heritage: traditions inherited over generations such as fine linen making

- **outdoor recreation, adventure and activities:** from land and water based activities (e.g., walking, hiking, biking, boating, golfing and horse-riding) to fun for all ages at locations such as Let's Go Hydro, Down Royal Racecourse

- **food and drink:** quality tourism experiences with local providers such as
  - immersive experiences: e.g. learn how to make a local dish or how a local beer or whiskey is crafted
  - guided trails: showcasing local food and drink provenance and suppliers with insights provided by an expert

- **events and festivals:** from community to large scale events

- **places to eat and drink:** from gastro pubs to restaurants and farmer's markets

- **places to stay:** encompassing all categories such as glamping, self-catering, B&Bs, guesthouses and hotels

- **exclusive venues**: for private and corporate occasions

Table 1 summarises key outcomes from the product audit conducted for this plan raising the following points

- **an opportunity to curate experiences that share the story of people and place:** for example, while there are 133 places to eat and drink such as cafes, pubs and restaurants, there are only 5 food and drink tourism experiences delivered by local providers

- **an opportunity to increase experiences bookable by independent visitors:** a low proportion of tourism experiences and activities are available to book on dates calendared across the season - limiting the potential for public promotion and the supply of experiences for independent visitors and small groups

- **a low availability of quality accommodation:** 6 out of 94 accommodation providers listed are hotels. A high proportion of providers are not officially graded

- **abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and adventures:** Lisburn & Castlereagh is well positioned to target visitors interested in the great outdoors including via golf, equestrian, water sports activities, walking and biking trails

Table 1: summary product audit outcomes

Category	Notable outcomes
Natural assets	Lisburn & Castlereagh has natural assets that are ideal for outdoor recreation including Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB, Hillsborough Forest, Slievenacloy Nature Reserve, Wallace Park and Portmore Lough.
Culture, history and heritage attractions and experiences	17 providers in this category: visitor attractions (12) and experiences (5). While all 17 service private bookings, just 6 of the 17 provide services bookable by independent visitors.
Outdoor recreation, adventure and activities	43 in this category: golf (7), equestrian (8), water sports (7) and farm activities (6). While all 43 service private bookings, < 50% provide services bookable by independent visitors.
Food and drink experiences and activities	5 in this category • 3 tours: Hilden Brewery, Hinch Distillery, Coca Cola Visitor Experience • 2 cookery schools The above are largely available subject to request for private bookings. There is low availability of experiences for this theme that is a priority for Lisburn & Castlereagh and an absence of experiences such as guided walking trails that share insights into local provenance and producers.
Places to eat and drink	177 listings: cafes, pubs, bars and restaurants – Lisburn & Castlereagh benefits from a quality food and drinking offering.
Places to stay	94 listings across hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and self-catering: a high proportion of providers operate ungraded accommodation: i.e., quality standards are not certified by Tourism Northern Ireland Across a total availability of 1477 beds, the allocation per accommodation provider category is summarised below: • **690:** 3 and 4 star graded hotels • **606:** self-catering (majority have no official grading) • **181:** guesthouse (majority have no official grading)

The audit combined with feedback from the consultation process has raised important points addressed in the following sections

A. Meeting the visitor demand for experiential tourism
B. Promoting signature tourism offerings that are unique to Lisburn & Castlereagh
C. Availability of accommodation
D. Tourism events, festivals and funding

A. Meeting visitor demand for experiential tourism:

Visitor expectations have been changing in recent years with a rising demand for experiential tourism. This is acknowledged in Tourism Northern Ireland communications emphasising how the contemporary visitor seeks authentic and engaging experiences (known as *immersive* experiences) that delve into the uniqueness of an area. The expectation is that these experiences

- **are rooted in place:** i.e., they share the story of local people and their community

- **offer an opportunity to learn something new**: e.g.,
    - a skill such as playing an instrument or learning a craft
    - an insight into a local tradition, a moment in history, a local hidden gem

- **are compelling and memorable:** e.g.,
    - a walking experience with a local guide showcasing breathtaking views
    - learning how to bake or cook a new recipe in a local chef's kitchen
    - hearing how a local craft whiskey is made, ending with a guided tasting
    - crafting a piece of wood, glass or clay with a master crafts person
    - following a themed trail (e.g., food and drink) that shares the provenance of local ingredients and insights into local producers
    - discovering new places, ways of living and communities on foot, or bike or boat

- **provoke thought and emotion:** i.e., they offer a fresh perspective and can stir a wide range of emotions such as excitement or happiness

Responding to the demand for experiential tourism, Tourism Northern Ireland launched the Embrace A Giant Spirit destination experience brand in 2019 with the cited promise of *"sharing the giant spirit of Northern Ireland and awakening the giant spirit in our visitors."* The brand hallmarks known as inspirers are summarised below:

- **Big heartedness:** defining the warm, friendly and down-to-earth nature of people in Northern Ireland

- **Legends and stories:** untapping the legends, myths and history of Northern Ireland to showcase how exciting and inspirational culture and creativity is

- **Originality:** showcasing Northern Ireland's pioneering spirit

- **Land, water and sea:** sharing the natural beauty of Northern Ireland while preserving and nurturing this so it can be enjoyed by future generations

As the product audit has raised the opportunity for Lisburn & Castlereagh to curate experiences that meet the needs of visitors seeking experiential tourism, this plan recommends that this is prioritised via bespoke enterprise development programmes to curate a compelling collection of experiences delivered by local people across the following themes:

> Curate authentic experiences that share the story of people and place, ensuring that these are available to book on a scheduled and private basis

- culture & heritage
- adventure & activities
- food & drink

To reach the widest possible audience, these experiences need to be bookable online (for independent visitors) and on a private booking basis (for private bookers and groups).

B. Promoting signature tourism offerings unique to the Lisburn & Castlereagh district

Lisburn & Castlereagh is in the fortunate position of having signature tourism attractions that are unique to this destination. These include

- Royal Hillsborough, Hillsborough Castle & Gardens
- Ulster Aviation Society
- EIKON exhibition centre and Maze Long Kesh
- Down Royal Racecourse
- Dundonald International Ice Bowl
- Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB

The outcomes for each noted attraction are addressed below along with recommendations to increase their profile and maximise opportunities.

Royal Hillsborough, Hillsborough Castle and Gardens

As previously noted, £26 million investment has been secured for the development of Royal Hillsborough village (widely known as Hillsborough) that because it has retained many of its original features is characterised by a distinctive sense of place.

To safeguard the village for future generations along with improving the quality of life for residents and the experience for visitors, the noted investment will be used to

- upgrade public realm across the streetscape and square, including the historic Courthouse
- address upgrades required at Hillsborough Castle and Gardens

> Raise the profile of Hillsborough Castle and Gardens so it enters the league of top 10 paid visitors' attractions in Northern Ireland

Apart from Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, the village is home to accommodation providers and quality places to eat and drink making it an ideal destination for visitors.

Noting that consultations with professional travel buyers made it clear that there is a desire to learn more about this offering and how it can be used for diverse requirements from luxury to corporate and from general to special interest visitors, the ambition is to raise the profile of this attraction during the lifetime of this plan so that it enters the league of top 10 paid visitor attractions as defined by Northern Ireland's Statistics and Research Agency- NISRA (joining other attractions such as Titanic Belfast, Mount Stewart, Marble Arch Caves and Saint Patrick's Centre).

Aligned with this ambition, this plan recommends the curation of a) a collection of experiences that share Royal Hillsborough's unique story (e.g., experiences delivered by Hillsborough Fort Guards) and b) communications that clarify the services and venues available to meet the needs of leisure and business tourism visitors.

> **Position Royal Hillsborough as part of the wider tourism offering, ensuring that social and economic opportunities spread across the district**

Importantly, as outlined in the LCCC Corporate Plan and Ambitions 2024/2028, Royal Hillsborough should not be presented as the sole reason for visiting the Lisburn & Castlereagh district, but rather as a visitor attraction that is part of a wider tourism offering that draws the visitor "to a range of other historic and natural attractions in the area."

Ulster Aviation Society

Unlike anything else in Ireland, 30+ historic aircrafts and exhibits celebrating Northern Ireland's aviation heritage are displayed in two hangars that are listed buildings within the 347-acre Maze Long Kesh site in Lisburn. The exhibition is curated by passionate volunteers, many of whom are mechanics, engineers and pilots devoted to the maintenance of the aircrafts that are presented in working order and pristine condition.

With tours (available subject to pre-booking) delivered by volunteer guides who are knowledgeable and passionate, the experience feels like walking on to a movie set where aircraft usually only seen in photographs are accessible to view and touch.

> **Provide bespoke supports so that the Ulster Aviation Society can maximise promotional and commercial opportunities**

As an experience, the Ulster Aviation Society has potential to be further developed to attract leisure and business tourism visitors seeking an original venue. To realise this opportunity, bespoke supports are required so that the Ulster Aviation Society is equipped with the commercial and operational know-how to achieve success.

EIKON exhibition centre and Maze Long Kesh

Maze Long Kesh is a 347-acre open space that houses two tourism-relevant sites: the Ulster Aviation Society and the 5,000m2 EIKON exhibition centre. Known for hosting the Balmoral Show (+100,000 visitors- Northern Ireland's largest agri-food event), EIKON is the largest exhibition centre in Northern Ireland.

> **Target commercial opportunities for EIKON supported by a strategic plan and explore the potential for tourism at Maze Long Kesh**

The venue functions well on a practical level with ample internal and external spaces, car and coach parking with easy access to accommodation in Lisburn & Castlereagh and neighbouring areas such as Belfast.

Noting that consultations conducted for this plan have confirmed interest in exhibition spaces that avoid the hassle of traffic-heavy urban areas, there is the potential to increase Lisburn & Castlereagh's reputation for the delivery of exhibitions for which a targeted commercial and operational strategic plan that champions a sustainable ethos (including sustainable travel solutions for reaching the exhibition centre) is required.

Considering the expanse of the Maze Long Kesh site, a separate study should be conducted to assess if and how the site can be further developed for the benefit of local communities and tourism.

Down Royal Racecourse

Located in County Down (approximately 20 minutes outside of Belfast), the Down Royal Racecourse stages some of the most prominent races on the Irish racing calendar. Renowned for being the only racecourse in Northern Ireland to host both jump and flat racing, Down Royal promises a compelling experience for visitors and a novel way to connect with local people.

With numerous private suites to avail of throughout the racecourse, this plan recommends that Down Royal is positioned as part of Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism offering to target leisure and business tourism visitors.

Dundonald International Ice Bowl

Set for an investment of £52 million and a target (post redevelopment) to welcome more than 700,000 visitors, Dundonald International Ice Bowl will boast an Olympic-sized ice rink, 24-lane bowling alley and extensive catering facilities.

A key function of a tourism visitor attraction is to create a compelling and memorable experience that shares a unique insight into the story of people and place, with the power to attract visitors - thus increasing in-destination dwell time that benefits the local economy.

Within this context, in its current format Dundonald Ice Bowl reads as a sports and recreational offering rather than as a fit for tourism.

> Assess if and how Dundonald International Ice Bowl can be positioned as part of the tourism offering

This plan thereby recommends that an assessment is conducted to determine if and how Dundonald International Ice Bowl can be positioned as an integral part of Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism offering and strategy.

The Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB

The Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB is a precious natural asset that is Northern Ireland's only Regional Park and one of nine designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Northern Ireland. Encompassing 4,200 acres and 11 miles along both sides of the River Lagan, the park bridges the urban hubs of Lisburn and Belfast connecting the cities via a towpath.

Home to a rich biodiversity and heritage, the park is characterised by an array of outdoor spaces including smaller parks, farmlands, woodlands, and meadows. Following a site visit of the Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB, it became clear that it has the potential to be developed to meet the needs of leisure and business tourism visitors. Some of the ideas raised included a safari-style exploration by jeep accompanied by Park Rangers that would be unique in Ireland.

While one third of the park's expanse is in the Belfast City Council area, two thirds are in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area. The value of the Lagan Valley Regional Park is recognised across Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council policies including the Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan 2017/2032 that references the park as a unique *"tourism/recreation asset that requires protection for future generations."*

As the opportunities that the park presents are variable and vast, this plan recommends that an independent study is conducted to include an assessment of

- how the park can be best positioned as a tourism asset with a sustainable and regenerative ethos at its heart
- what kind of experiences and services can be developed to meet the needs of the local community, leisure and business tourism customers in Ireland and internationally
- what kind of events can be curated
- what kind of customers and markets are suited to the offering
- how can the park generate social and economic benefits as a tourism offering
- what kind of communications are required for tourism purposes
- what kind of supports are required to achieve success

> Conduct an independent assessment to determine how best to position the Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB as a quality sustainable tourism offering that benefits the local community and visitors

As the park is jointly funded by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Belfast City Council, this study would be ideally conducted in partnership with both councils.

C. Availability of accommodation

The product audit conducted for this plan confirms that there are 587 bedroom units with a total capacity of 1477 beds available across the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

More than 50% of the available rooms are in Lisburn, the district's only city. A further 17% of available rooms are concentrated in the historic villages of Royal Hillsborough and Moira, with the balance largely spread throughout Aghalee, Ballynahinch, Carryduff and Dundonald.

The total of 1477 available beds are spread across the following accommodation provider categories:

- **690:** 3 and 4 star graded hotels with the 4-star La Mon Hotel & Country Club (a total of 280 beds) and the 3-star Premier Inn Lisburn (a total of 180 beds) providing the highest proportion of inventory

- **606:** self-catering (the majority have no official grading)

- **181:** guesthouse (the majority have no official grading)

Considering the destination's capacity to attract luxury visitors, there are no 5-star options and a significant proportion of accommodation providers are ungraded.

While the destination has benefited from new openings in recent years including the Haslem Hotel in Lisburn (2020) with 45 bedrooms and Arthurs Townhouse in Royal Hillsborough (2023) with 12 bedrooms, the low availability of quality accommodation is widely referenced including in the Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan 2017/2032: *"the estimated number of overnight stays was the lowest across all councils […]. There is a lack of hotel accommodation in the area and in general the number of beds in licensed accommodation."*

While Lisburn & Castlereagh's location means that it can benefit from the wider availability of accommodation in neighbouring areas such as Belfast, the low availability of accommodation can impact dwell time running the risk that Lisburn & Castlereagh attracts a high proportion of day trippers rather than longer stays.

This in turn means that visitors have less opportunity to choose staying in this district area in a destination that offers a slower pace of life by comparison with Belfast.

This plan accordingly recommends scoping the potential to develop sustainable accommodation solutions across all accommodation categories: e.g., self-catering, guesthouses and hotels.

Considering the destination profile and the presence of The Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB, it is recommended that the potential for luxury lodge style accommodation that works in harmony with the natural environment is explored.

> Maximise opportunities for increased dwell time by exploring the potential for investment in sustainable accommodation solutions

D. Tourism events, festivals and funding

Supporting the development of an annual programme of major and community events to drive visitor footfall has been a priority focus for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. Examples of major events supported by the council include

- Hillsborough Castle & Gardens Honey Fair: August annually
- Down Royal Festival of Racing: November annually

The product audit conducted for this plan highlighted twelve events defined as small or major events. However, not all these events (e.g., Northern Ireland International Cross Country – October annually) are relevant for the purposes of tourism.

A tourism event should showcase a destination's culture, people and place in a way that **a)** enriches the visitor experience, **b)** welcomes visitors from the local community and Northern Ireland marketplace, and **c)** proactively targets and generates new money via external visitors (e.g., from the Republic of Ireland and international markets) into the economy.

Importantly, the event must have a strong concept and should ideally take place during low season months when the economic benefits are most needed. Appendix 1 summarises examples of successful tourism events in Ireland.

Within this context, it is recommended that a new event is identified with the potential to attract domestic and international visitors. This event should draw upon Lisburn & Castlereagh's unique identity and strengths: e.g., food and drink, Christmas markets. It should also be rooted in a compelling concept and innovative programming.

> Curate the concept and delivery of one successful tourism-focused festival during the lifetime of this plan

Once concepts and programming are identified, it is further recommended that the council should consult with Tourism Northern Ireland for guidance, noting that there are two funding options currently available (national and international) as summarised under Appendix 2.

If Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council proceeds with a new event, it is recommended that investment via Tourism Northern Ireland's national event fund is initially sought. Once this event establishes a strong track record and a demonstrated ability to win external visitors, the potential to apply for the international event fund can be determined.

V. Lough Neagh Partnership

The Lough Neagh Partnership is a stakeholder organisation that was established in 2003 to help manage and protect Lough Neagh. The board of the partnership is comprised of key stakeholders, elected representatives, landowners, fishermen, farmers, local communities. The Lough Neagh Partnership is the primary organisation responsible for the sustainable development of Lough Neagh.

Core funding for this partnership is provided by all councils that surround the lough. This includes Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council where a 3-mile stretch along the lough's shoreline (with two sand refineries and a private marina) is part of this jurisdiction.

> **Explore the potential for Lough Neagh to be positioned as part of Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism offering**

This partnership facilitates the potential for

- **new experience development:** delivered by providers on the stretch of Lough Neagh that is part of the Lisburn & Castlereagh district

- **collaborations:** with tourism providers that represent Lough Neagh

- **profiling Lough Neagh** as part of the Lisburn & Castlereagh tourism offering

VI.   Dispersion across all tourism businesses and the destination

While positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination that is home to unique visitor attractions and experiences, it is essential to ensure that opportunities are maximised across the district for all tourism and hospitality businesses, their associated communities, and local economies.

> **Focus on promoting the full tourism offering and dispersion so that all tourism providers and communities across Lisburn & Castlereagh benefit**

Via the consultation process, Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism businesses have asked that signature visitor attractions with extensive capacity for visitors are

- promoted as part of the wider collection of tourism experiences and services
- leveraged to benefit all tourism businesses along with all urban and rural communities across city, town, villages, and hamlets

This approach is essential for sustainable tourism development that encourages year-round travel and dispersion. Showcasing the full breadth of what the destination can offer is also key for a) appealing to diverse visitor interests and b) creating reasons to repeat visit.

This plan thereby recommends that Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council stays abreast of the full catalogue of market-ready tourism experiences and services that are ready for promotion during the lifetime of this plan and beyond across the following categories:

- **Culture, history and heritage:** e.g., historic visitor attractions and museums, guided walking trails, craft experiences (e.g., ceramics, textiles)

- **Outdoor recreation, adventure and activities:** e.g., activity centres, guided walking, hiking, boating and biking experiences, golfing, horse riding

- **Food and drink experiences and activities:** e.g., guided food and drink trails, cookery experiences and guided tours (Hilden Brewery and Hinch Distillery)

- **Places to eat and drink:** places such as gastro pubs and restaurants that champion local provenance, produce and producers

- **Places to stay:** all accommodation types- self-catering, B&Bs, guesthouses and hotels

- **Exclusive venues:** exhibition centres, hotels, stately homes, eateries, visitor attractions and places like Castlereagh Golf Club and Drumbo Park Greyhound Stadium with spaces for semi-private and private hire

VII.   Sustainability, regeneration and climate action

While sustainable and regenerative tourism is not referenced in the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, it is prioritised in other Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council policies. For example, the Local Development Plan 2032 references *"sustainable tourism development"* that benefits local people, the local economy and visitors and the LCCC Corporate Plan and Ambitions

Hilden Brewery: oldest independent brewery in Ireland

2024/2028 champions the promotion of sustainable tourism along with "the use of our asset base to increase sustainability" under Strategic Theme No 3 – Planet.

Sustainability will be a key priority for the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029, aligning with existing council policies and the *Department for the Economy's recent Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan's* vision to establish Northern Ireland as a destination with *"sustainability at its core."*

Accordingly, the intention is to ingrain a culture of sustainability so that the destination's landscape, built heritage and cultural heritage is celebrated and preserved for future generations. Accordingly, tourism activity will demonstrate a holistic commitment to

- safeguarding the environment
- championing local communities
- supporting livelihoods and the local economy

While this approach brings wide-ranging benefits to local people, it also meets the expectations of visitors as national and independent reports confirm a rising demand for sustainable tourism destinations.

Whereas sustainable tourism seeks to minimise harm, regenerative tourism aspires to actively heal and nurture.

Within tourism lexicon, the term *sustainability* is often used to reference both sustainable and regenerative tourism practices. However, as regenerative tourism development can achieve more and there is a growing understanding of its greater impact, Lisburn & Castlereagh needs to be transparent about both sustainable and regenerative activity alongside the associated outcomes.

During the period 2024-2029, key activity will include:

- working with tourism and hospitality businesses to ingrain a culture of sustainability, maximising all associated social and economic benefits
- instilling and promoting measures that safeguard the environment and reduce emissions, ensuring that outcomes are visible and measurable based on pre-determined baselines
- curation of sustainable tourism experiences and products that authentically represent people and place
- promoting existing and future sustainable travel solutions (e.g., on foot, by bike, boat, or public transport), routes (e.g., Lagan towpath) and itineraries
- considering the prevalence of quality places to eat and drink, working with experts to provide guidance about what ingredients are sustainable for promotion on menus
- providing guidance for tourism businesses and communities about how to support visitors so that they engage respectfully within the destination
- raising awareness by communicating activity across offline and online channels
- aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goals and the VICE model for sustainable tourism

> **Sustainable and regenerative tourism is a strategic priority 2024-2029.**
>
> **A culture of sustainability will be ingrained that demonstrates an evidence-based commitment.**

- **Visitors:** welcoming, involving and delighting visitors
- **Industry:** achieving a profitable and prosperous industry
- **Community:** engaging and benefiting host communities and showcasing/respecting their unique identities and culture
- **Environment**: being mindful of the collective impact of visitors, industry and community on the environment and the importance of nurturing and protecting this

VIII. Placing inclusion and collaboration at the heart of tourism development

Inclusion has arisen as a key pillar for the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 encompassing accessible tourism development, social inclusion, community engagement and collaboration as priorities. This aligns with the Department for the Economy's Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan that identifies inclusion as a key pillar.

In the context of the Lisburn & Castlereagh District, this ambition is explained further below under the following headings: collaboration; community; accessible tourism development and social inclusion

Collaboration: this was a key pillar of the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, prioritising the development of partnerships with

- stakeholders such as Visit Belfast and Tourism Northern Ireland
- tourism businesses and sites with the capacity to welcome large visitor numbers such as the Historic Royal Palaces and the Ulster Aviation Society
- stakeholders that can support investment in tourism accommodation
- businesses to create packaged experiences, including food and drink

Going forward, the strategy will build on this approach to include establishing a robust collaborative foundation across tourism and hospitality businesses in the Lisburn & Castlereagh district. As collaboration is the foundation of all successful tourism destinations, this is a key step to achieving the increased promotion and growth set out in this plan. Led by the Lisburn & Castlereagh Councils' tourism team, activity will include

- **direct engagement** with Lisburn & Castlereagh Councils' tourism team and local tourism and hospitality businesses
- **an annual calendar of events** organised by Lisburn & Castlereagh Council's tourism team:

  - **one annual forum:** one full day in-person event when tourism industry-relevant updates are delivered, ending with a networking event
  - **networking events:** two half day in-person events where businesses meet each other and establish the potential for partnership opportunities
  - **familiarisation trip:** min. one annual day trip empowering businesses to make new connections and experience the destination on a firsthand basis

- **capability supports:** designed to a) connect local businesses, b) increase collaborative and networking skillsets, c) generate referral opportunities across businesses and d) raise awareness of how the Lisburn & Castlereagh offering sits within the wider Northern Ireland context and the Embrace A Giant Spirit destination experience brand

Community: noting that community is at the heart of all Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council policies and that community is at the heart of sustainable tourism development, this plan recommends that Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry and offering connects with community.

This can be addressed in multiple ways including by
- making the community aware that as tourism shares the story of people and place, it shares their unique story
- making visitors aware of ways they can directly engage with community: e.g., via golf clubs, horse racing events, farmers markets, events and festivals
- empowering community representatives to become local experts with the know-how to guide visitors and support sustainable tourism
- promoting the profile of tourism experiences, products and hospitality services to residents and businesses, including how these support local livelihoods and the economy

- identifying if there are community representatives from non-tourism backgrounds with the skillsets required to transition into tourism – e.g., to deliver tourism experiences

Accessible Tourism Development and Social Inclusion: the intention is to build a culture and infrastructure that promotes accessibility for all people.

Guided by experts, relevant stakeholders, organisations and local industry experts, all sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry will be supported to be responsible and proactive about addressing diverse human needs including via communications, product, experience and service delivery.

This will include the promotion of Universal Design along with no and low-cost solutions that can improve accessibility within tourism businesses and infrastructure

Inclusion and collaboration is a strategic priority 2024-2029:

- creating a robust collaborative framework for local tourism providers
- connecting the local community with tourism
- establishing partnerships with key stakeholders
- recognising and addressing the needs of all people

IX.   Supporting livelihoods and the economy: commercial development and data analytics

Aligned with sustainable tourism development, this plan advocates for livelihoods, job creation and the local economy ensuring that benefits spread across the full breadth of the destination. This aligns with the LCCC Corporate Plan and Ambitions 2024/2028 that references the following benchmarks for success:

- an increase in job numbers, including via start-up activity
- an increase in the number of visitor trips and visitor spend per annum

While the starting point for economic success is rooted in collaboration whereby tourism and hospitality businesses work together and in partnership with the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's tourism team, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland, additional supports are required to maximise economic development opportunities. These include

- **strategic capabilities:** empowering tourism businesses to make smart choices about which opportunities to target to achieve growth
- **data collation and analysis:** promoting how data collation and analysis is essential for achieving sustainable, stable and profitable revenue generation

To achieve the growth targets in this plan, the delivery of commercial and data analytics enterprise development supports are recommended to help businesses and the local economy thrive.

Data collation and analysis: challenges, benefits and processes

Tourism businesses advise that it is challenging to assess business performance and trends at a local level. While there is useful information and data available at a national level via Tourism Northern Ireland (largely informed by NISRA data), the industry seeks a) destination-

specific insights and b) consolidated data: i.e., one report that captures performance and trends.

Devising a local data capture mechanism will take time and present challenges. These include

- *collating data across diverse sectors:* accommodation, visitor attractions, experience & activity providers, festivals, places to eat, drink & socialise
- *inconsistent data collation:* not all businesses have processes in place to record data – e.g., some will not be able to advise what percentage of their visitors come from the domestic and international marketplace.
- *Covid-19:* the pandemic disrupted the collation of tourism data

Conversely, robust data collation can deliver significant benefits. These include:

- *an empowered industry:* via quality data capture, LCCC (businesses and destination) can indicate strengths and challenges to optimise economic performance
- *grant aid and funding:* robust data can support funding applications strengthening the opportunity to achieve funding for LCCC (businesses and destination)

Mindful of challenges, it is recommended that Lisburn & Castlereagh develops a two-way approach:

Tourism businesses	Support education and awareness building an industry understanding of a) why data collation is essential for growing business opportunities, b) what data to collate and c) how to analyse this data to maximise opportunities
Destination	Plan for LCCC-wide data capture beginning with a survey questionnaire that a) can be completed anonymously by tourism businesses, b) includes all businesses - those with robust and weaker data capture processes and c) is easy to complete – i.e., a short number of relevant questions: visitor numbers, country of origin, channels (how visitors make their bookings)
	Using the outputs from this questionnaire and relevant insights available to LCCC (e.g., footfall at events), Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland data, generate an annual overview of performance and trends to share with industry

The following fields should be considered for inclusion in the survey questionnaire:

1.	Business Category	A. Accommodation provider B. Visitor Attraction C. Experience & Activity providers D. Events & festivals E. Venues (places to eat, drink and socialise)		
2.	Numbers	*Accommodation:* total bed nights		
		Business category B-E: total visitors' numbers		
3.	Markets include the option to tick the percentage of visitors per market	ROI NI GB	US France Germany	Spain Italy Other
4.	Channels include the option to tick the percentage of visitors per market	Website Social Media	Referral: e.g., a local partner Direct: e.g., phone, email)	Travel Buyer Other
5.	Track unavailable data	For data capture requests 2-4, include a field entitled "data is unavailable." This will enable a) tourism businesses with incomplete data to participate and complete what they can and b) LCCC to assess gaps in data collation and annual progress in this regard		

X. The future of Visitor Services in Lisburn & Castlereagh

The provision of guidance about how to maximise the role and the potential of the district's Visitor Servicing function was an ask of this plan to include assessing gaps and new opportunities. This task is explored in this section under the following headings:

A. Existing Visitor Services
- Lisburn & Castlereagh
- Visit Belfast and Northern Ireland Visitor Information Centres
B. Learnings: the provision of Visitor Services for the future
C. Recommendations for Visitor Servicing in Lisburn & Castlereagh 2024-2029

The outcome confirms that the future of Visitor Servicing is a hybrid model that seamlessly integrates human resources with digital solutions.

A. Existing Visitor Services

Lisburn & Castlereagh

With the core purpose of providing visitors with quality insights about things to do and places to see, eat and stay in the district and across Northern Ireland, Lisburn & Castlereagh operates one fixed Visitor Information Centre known as the *Lisburn Visitor Information Centre* located (since March 2022) in the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum. This centre offers
- communications that support visitors:
  - printed materials: free maps along with flyers and brochures that promote businesses and the destination
  - website research via reception staff
- booking assistance including emailing and printing tickets
- a gift store, with locally made products championed
- printing and photocopying services (available at a small charge)
- parking, including accessible parking
- comfort services, including accessible toilets

In addition, the district operates a mobile Visitor Information service in the form of a pop-up trailer seven days a week in the carpark of Hillsborough Forest Park during the high season period from April to September. This trailer facilitates one staff member to manage information requests and to distribute the stocked printed communications (maps, flyers, brochures) to visitors.

Visitor Information services provided by Lisburn & Castlereagh are in high demand with 30,000 enquiries serviced by staff members in 2023. Key challenges and viewpoints that have emerged regarding existing services offering are:

- **Services are print-reliant:** printed communications such as maps, flyers and brochures are the key sources of information for visitors

- **The layout of the Lisburn Visitor Information Centre could function more effectively to engage the visitor:** for example to include a welcome desk visible upon arrival, large screens with rolling content, inspiring window displays, and compelling communications that showcase the local tourism offering
- **Lisburn & Castlereagh would benefit from a permanent Visitor Information Centre at Hillsborough Forest Park:** the existing mobile Visitor Information service located at Hillsborough Forest Park attracts +600,000 visitors annually.

  The district would benefit from a permanent Visitor Information service centre in this location that can encourage visitation across the district

- **The mobile (trailer) Visitor Information service could function more effectively:**
  - power points and WIFI access could be added so that additional work such as social media management can be conducted during quieter times
  - destination branding could be added on the exterior to include QR codes with compelling content and a photographable map
  - with a fixed location for the Visitor Information service centre at Hillsborough Forest Park, this trailer offers the flexibility of basing Visitor Information services in diverse locations throughout the destination

- **Digital marketing:** the Visitor Information services team would benefit from a dedicated resource for digital marketing

<u>Visit Belfast and Northern Ireland Visitor Information Centres</u>
Lisburn & Castlereagh is additionally promoted via Visit Belfast services:

- **Visit Belfast Welcome Centre:** the main resource and information hub, located in the heart of Belfast City
- **Cruise Welcome hub:** working closely with Belfast Harbour in a Cruise Destination Management role to promote Belfast and neighbouring areas such as Lisburn & Castlereagh to cruise passengers (+300,000 in 2023)
- **Visitor touch points:** e.g., airports with self-service information

Just as the Lisburn Visitor Information Centre provides information relevant to the Lisburn & Castlereagh district as well as throughout Northern Ireland, Lisburn & Castlereagh tourism businesses can benefit from referrals from Visit Belfast and other Visitor Information Centres throughout Northern Ireland.

B. Learnings: the provision of Visitor Services for the future

Apart from assessing the Visitor Information service centres in Lisburn & Castlereagh, as part of the research for this plan

- site visits and consultations were conducted in Dublin, Belfast, Newry Mourne Down and Derry ~ Londonderry
- visitor services models from Ireland, Scandinavia and Germany were analysed

The consensus is that the key purpose of Visitor Servicing is to **inspire** visitors to see more and do more, in turn supporting the local economy. Visitor Services must thereby meet the needs of the contemporary visitor who seeks to

- connect with people who live locally
- intimately understand the destination, from a local perspective
- find recommendations that match their unique interests while bypassing the requirement to research high volumes of online and offline content

Further outcomes emphasised the need for

- **a hybrid model approach:** aligning the personal contact provided by Visitor Services teams with the digital solutions that support their work.
- **quality training:** supporting Visitor Services teams to a) meet the needs of the contemporary visitor and b) promote a sustainable and accessible tourism ethos
- **innovation:** for example by
  - **extending the Visitor Services function:** working with local tourism providers (e.g., hotels), non-tourism businesses (e.g., newsagents) and trained volunteers so that visitors are supported across a wider integrated framework
  - **adopting flexible solutions:** e.g., providing Visitor Services through alternative methods (on foot or by bike) rather than solely within buildings
- **KPI-led performance management:** collation of qualitative and quantitative data that measures Visitor Services performance so that strengths are optimised, and challenges are swiftly addressed

C. Recommendations for Visitor Servicing in Lisburn & Castlereagh: 2024-2029

Following this research, the following table summarises the key recommendations for Lisburn & Castlereagh to consider regarding the delivery of Visitor Services:

1. **Address the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) located in the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum giving equal consideration to**
   a. the provision of customer-centric VIC services and
   b. the delivery of a quality visitor experience via the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum as a visitor attraction

   As part of this work, consider how

   - the Visitor Information Centre can be modernised to engage the visitor and maximise opportunities for Lisburn & Castlereagh
   - the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum can be developed and reconfigured to a) share the heritage of fine-linen design and b) maximise social and economic opportunities for the district

- other services could be positioned here that align with the ethos of services offered in the building: e.g., City Centre Management and Community Services

In addition,

- assess the costs of installing a welcome desk visible upon arrival, large screens with rolling content, inspiring window displays, and compelling communications that showcase the local tourism offering

  Once costs are finalised, consult with the Visitor Services team to determine what should be prioritised based on their potential to generate increased opportunities

2. **In the immediate term, address the mobile Visitor Information service (trailer):**
- install a power point and WIFI so that work can be conducted during quiet times
- brand the exterior so that it promotes the destination and compelling content – with local tips and maps inc. via QR codes
- once visitor servicing at Hillsborough Forest Park is addressed, use the trailer as a flexible VIC that be based on diverse locations across the district

3. **Install a permanent Visitor Information Centre at Hillsborough Forest Park:** identify a building convenient to Hillsborough Forest Park where a permanent Visitor Information service centre can be placed to service the +600,000 visitors to the park and raise awareness about the tourism offering in Royal Hillsborough and (importantly) throughout the Lisburn & Castlereagh district

4. **In the immediate term, manage and reduce printed material:**
- regularly audit printed material to ensure that only essential communications are stocked
- where possible, rely upon communications that can be photographed by visitors to reduce paper waste

5. **Think hybrid – combine human and digital power:**
- ensure that the service provided champions engagement with team members that is valued by visitors, blended with the convenience of digital solutions
- invest in a dedicated digital marketing resource – this is essential for maximising opportunities

6. **Think flexibility and innovation:** particularly during high demand periods and events, consider alternative methods for Visitor Servicing – for example, delivered by a cyclist on a branded bicycle

7. **Lean on the wider community to extend services:** engage with local tourism and non-tourism businesses (e.g., newsagents, public transport providers) to create a wider Visitor Services network by delivering a **Local experts programme** whereby
- tourism and hospitality providers are informed about how to refer and grow opportunities for the destination

- **non tourism businesses** that interface with visitors (e.g., retail stores, places to eat and drink) are informed about how to refer and grow opportunities for the destination
- **volunteers** are trained to support visitor services activity, particularly during high demand periods

8. **Invest in training and robust data collation:**
- ensure that the Visitor Services team receive ongoing training to meet the needs of the contemporary visitor to maximise opportunities for the destination
- work with the team to identify easily collated metrics that can measure performance along with processes for regular assessment of same

1.6. Growth Target and Key Strategic Pillars

In the contemporary context international tourism is in an uncertain place following the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the prevalence of international economic and geopolitical unrest.

While the challenges are clear, in the current environment these co-exist with optimistic forecasts. Both the Department of the Economy's Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland – 10 Year Plan and Tourism Ireland project growth in the value of tourism in Northern Ireland:

- The *Department for the Economy's Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan* (2024) sets out the strategic aim of increasing the value of tourism to the Northern Ireland economy by 50% -75% compared to 2019, or growth of 4%-6% per annum.

- The *Tourism Ireland Marketing Plan* (2024) sets targets of driving tourism revenue growth in Northern Ireland by +6.5% year-on-year to 2030. This is compared to targeted island of Ireland growth of 5.6% average year on year growth to 2030.

Following research and consultations including with Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre, a target has been set to increase revenue generation via tourism in Lisburn & Castlereagh by 34% in 2029 compared with 2019: i.e., 5.6% per annum over six years 2024-2029.

This target serves to provide a benchmark against which tourism businesses can assess their performance and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council can assess destination-wide performance.

Integrating all outcomes that have emerged, all activity over the next six-years will be guided by five strategic pillars:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Position	Innovate	Collaborate	Nurture	Grow

While the following table summarises the key focal points for these pillars, the Action Plan 2024-2029 under section three outlines the objectives and stepwise actions to address under each pillar.

The Action Plan 2024-2029 under section 3 of this plan itemises the objectives and associated actions that apply to each of these pillars that need to be addressed over the coming years to achieve the vision, ambition and targets set out in this strategy.

Table 3: key focal points for the five strategic pillars 2024-2029

Strategic pillar	Key focal points

Position	Position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a distinguished, sustainable and socially inclusive tourism destination that is unlike any other, defined by
	
	• a leisurely pace of life
	• close-knit communities, deeply connected with their homeplace
	• welcoming people who take time to engage in conversation with visitors
	• attractions and experiences that are impossible to experience anywhere else in Ireland inc. Northern Ireland's only Royal Residence, the Ulster Aviation Society and The Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB
	• vibrant hubs across city, town, villages and hamlets
	• a place to enjoy nature and the great outdoors
	• a place that meets diverse visitor needs and interests: culture and heritage; outdoor recreation, adventure and activities, food and drink
	• accessible geographical location
	  - bordered by 6 of Northern Ireland 11 district council areas
	  - within easy reach of Belfast: including by foot along the Lagan towpath that connects Lisburn with Belfast
	  - within easy reach of Dublin

Innovate	Be a frontrunner in innovation, ensuring this is a hallmark of all activity inc. by • investing in quality tangible infrastructure: including the successful completion of the Royal Hillsborough development plan • investing in the development of authentic immersive experiences that share the unique story of people and place (ensuring that these experiences are bookable by individuals and groups) across the following themes: culture, history & heritage; outdoor recreation, adventure & activities; food & drink • promoting services and experiences that share Lisburn & Castlereagh's unique tourism offering via communications • curating a signature tourism-relevant event/festival during the lifetime of this plan with an innovative concept and programming that has the potential to attract domestic and international audiences • the delivery of Visitor Services: e.g., incorporating flexible solutions (on foot, by bike or boat), sharing insights and gems directly from local people • seeking investment in sustainable accommodation solutions that are in-keeping with the destination and align with its ethos

Collaborate	Be a champion of collaboration by embedding a collaborative framework:
	
	• within the destination:
	  - create a robust network that connects all tourism and hospitality businesses so that they know, support and refer each other to include the delivery of a) one annual forum sharing industry-relevant updates, followed by networking, b) two half day networking events and c) min. one annual familiarisation trip
	  - promote engagement with the tourism destination offering and associated businesses among local communities
	  - provide tourism businesses and community members with the opportunity to become an extended part of Visitor Services
	
	• outside the destination: proactively develop partnerships with stakeholders that can support, promote and maximise opportunities inc. Visit Belfast, The Lough Neagh Partnership, Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland and professional travel buyers

Strategic pillar	Key focal points
Nurture	Promote Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination defined by integrity and thoughtful hospitality, making this evident in all activity including by
	• ingraining a sustainable and regenerative tourism ethos with evidenced based outcomes • caring for all people including those with physical, mental and intellectual needs by a) supporting education and awareness and b) providing guidance and communications that empower visitors to make sound choices about how to experience the destination • championing and supporting tourism and hospitality providers • placing community and local people at the heart of the tourism offering • guiding visitors so that they behave responsibly in the destination • curating experiences that celebrate cultural heritage, preserving traditions (e.g., linen craft) inherited from the past for future generations • preserving built heritage for future generations by investing in quality destination development that enriches the lives of local communities and the experience for visitors • safeguarding the natural environment and biodiversity: e.g., Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB
Grow	Support local livelihoods, economic growth and enterprise development

	• Deliver supports for industry to a) expand commercial capabilities, b) promote collaborative and cross-referral opportunities and c) instil robust data collation and analysis processes, ensuring that benefits spread across the Lisburn & Castlereagh's geography.
	
	• Apply a dual approach to data collation and analysis by a) supporting tourism businesses to improve their data collation processes and b) investing in destination-wide metrics encompassing local data (inc. data collated via a survey issued to tourism businesses, counter data at visitor attractions, footfall data from events and festivals) and data available via Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland and NISRA.
	
	• Adopt a proactive and goal-focused approach to achieve success, targeting opportunities that are best suited to Lisburn & Castlereagh:
	  - **Customer segments:** individuals and groups, couples, families, soft adventurers, golfers, inter-generational travellers and enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, soft adventure and outdoor activities
	  - **Markets:** Northern Ireland (local, neighbouring locations and wider NI), ROI, North America, Great Britain, France, Germany
	  - **Opportunities:** leisure tourism (including luxury leisure) as a priority and business tourism for relevant providers
	
	• Invest in visitor services to maximise opportunities
	
	• In the context of the Economic Development Efficiency Review refocus LCCC's tourism team to maximise social and economic opportunities, giving due consideration to resourcing the following activity: product and partnership development, digital marketing

2. Where We Are Now

This section explores the status of tourism in Lisburn & Castlereagh following the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 and outcomes relevant for the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 under the following three headings:

- **The Past:** an overview of the vision, ambition and priorities in the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022

- **Current Position:** the status of tourism post the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 and prior to the initiation of the Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2024-2029

- **The Future:** outcomes that inform the Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2024-2029

2.1 The Past

The Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 sets out a vision for Lisburn & Castlereagh to achieve 10% growth in staying visitors and revenue spend by advancing as a *"confident, vibrant and successful […] quality tourism destination"* that offers *"authentic quality experiences."*

Outlining how Lisburn & Castlereagh enjoys a prime eastern location close to the urban centres of Belfast and Dublin, two international airports, M1 and A1 roads, rail links and accessible port links, five cornerstones were identified as key for tourism development:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
The Gemstone	Refine	Collaborate	The Foundations	Broadening the Charm

The Gemstone

This cornerstone focuses on investing in Royal Hillsborough to position the village that encompasses Hillsborough Forest and Hillsborough Castle and Gardens (the only location in Northern Ireland with Royal status) as the leading must-see visitor attraction in the Lisburn & Castlereagh district.

The Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 references financial investments secured to develop the village, castle, gardens, forest, Old Fort and Courthouse to deliver a programme of works under the Hillsborough Tourism Master Plan encompassing

- **public realm scheme for the heart of the village:** a series of works focused on enhancing the quality of the village to include the streetscape, footpaths and access to them, traffic flow, street dressing and wayfinding, lighting and street furniture

- **enhancing and upgrading the village's tangible assets for the benefit of the local community and visitors:** 17th century Hillsborough Old Fort, 18th century Old Courthouse, 18th century Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, Hillsborough Forest (in cooperation with the Northern Ireland Forest Service)

Emphasising the historic and contemporary importance of Royal Hillsborough, the plan states how Royal Hillsborough
- is the gemstone that sets the Lisburn & Castlereagh District apart from anywhere else

- is key for positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a world-class tourist destination that will inspire further tourism growth across the whole council area
- is a prime location for world-class events and festivals that can attract domestic and international visitors
- will require investment in quality accommodation to realise its tourism potential

Refine

This cornerstone defines ways Lisburn & Castlereagh can be positioned as a quality tourism destination including through

- **food:** supporting the speciality food sector to establish the district as a leading culinary destination renowned for provenance, quality produce and exceptional producers

- **events:** supporting a calendar of vibrant events that share the story of people and place, including the Balmoral Show and Horse Racing that is synonymous with the district

- **Lisburn:** supporting the district's only city by
  - championing the Lisburn Historic Quarter
  - developing a new city centre hotel
  - emphasising the creative industries synonymous with Lisburn such as the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum

- **Hub communities:** championing the full breadth of the district across urban and rural areas encompassing charming towns, villages and hamlets and a compact city that is easy to navigate

Collaborate

A key cornerstone of the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, the approach focuses on developing relationships with private, public and community partners including ambitions such as

- **Maze Long Kesh:** exploring the tourism potential at Maze Long Kesh alongside the Ulster Aviation Society and Eikon Centre that are located here.

- **Development of tourism packages:** working with tourism industry partners and stakeholders to develop tourism packages
  - with Hillsborough Caste and Gardens to encourage visitation at Royal Hillsborough village and the wider environs
  - between local tourism and hospitality businesses, including to emphasise the quality food and drink offering

- **Investment in accommodation:** working with stakeholders and investors to achieve investment and development opportunities for quality accommodation across the district

- **Partner** with all stakeholders and organisations such as Tourism Northern Ireland that can support tourism activity conducted by Lisburn & Castlereagh

The Foundations

This cornerstone focuses on infrastructure to improve the quality of life for local people and the experience for visitors. It references the enhancement and development of roadways and waterways alongside regeneration projects within hub communities such as the West Lisburn Master Plan with a new spatial framework encompassing the revitalisation of Market Square, enhancing connectivity, commercial and retail development

Broadening the Charm

This cornerstone recommends promoting the Lisburn & Castlereagh district as a series of boutique offerings across urban and rural areas to include

- highlighting the vibrancy and uniqueness of the region's hub communities across city, towns, villages and hamlets

- leveraging Royal Hillsborough to emphasise the unique character of the district

- working closely with community to ensure that the district's tourism development plans benefit local people as a priority, alongside the visitor

- showcasing how culture, heritage and the arts are intrinsic to the district's story

- considering how signature leisure facilities such as the Dundonald International Ice Bowl can be positioned to attract domestic and international visitors

2.2 Current Position

The Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 was the first tourism strategy coordinated by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council since its establishment as a local authority. Soon after the initiation of this strategy, the world experienced unprecedented disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022 that stopped or limited domestic and international travel.

Despite significant challenges, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council adopted a goal-focused approach that has led to achievements upon which the Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2024-2029 can build.

> Despite the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, a robust foundation of successes has been achieved

These include:

- **Multiple tourism infrastructure projects:** for example
  - Royal Hillsborough as a world-class heritage village: securing a+£26million investment to develop / enhance public realm and historic buildings
  - Digital sculpture trail in Hillsborough Forest: ten giant sculptures created by leading artists supported by an augmented reality digital app
  - Guess How Much I Love You trail: celebrating the author and lifelong Lisburn resident, Sam McBratney, writer of the international bestseller *Guess How Much I Love You* (1994)

- **Elevating the food and drink offering:**
  - raising the profile of the rich food and drink heritage, innovative producers and quality eateries as a primary motivator for visiting the Lisburn & Castlereagh area
  - developing a successful annual programme of farmers markets

- championing communities that champion provenance and quality Northern Ireland food and drink produce: e.g., the Speciality Food Fair in Moira (August annually)

- **Securing investment in accommodation:**
  - **The Haslem Hotel in Lisburn (2020):** 45 rooms and 7 apartments, with restaurant, bar, meeting and function space
  - **Arthur's Royal Hillsborough (2023):** 12 luxury boutique rooms and café / restaurant

- **Events and festivals:** an annual programme of major and community events to drive visitor footfall such as the Balmoral Show (+120,000 visitors in May annually) and the Down Royal Festival of Racing (November annually)

- **Integrated Marketing campaigns:** delivering an annual Integrated Marketing Campaign to increase awareness and footfall to the Lisburn & Castlereagh district

Expectations of the contemporary visitor:
The world has changed since the pandemic. As outlined by Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland, the contemporary visitor seeks sustainable destinations that champion the environment and local people. These visitors

- are interested in authentic experiences that share the story of people and place
- make considered choices about the services and destinations they invest in
- are mindful of their impact on people, planet and pocket

Balancing infrastructure development with tourism industry development
The resources of the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's tourism team to date have leaned toward the development of tourism infrastructure.

Going forward to meet the needs of the contemporary visitor, this approach will need to be rebalanced so that the team is additionally supported to proactively invest in

Sustainable tourism development: working with tourism businesses and key stakeholders to ensure that all activity is underpinned by an ethos and practices that promote
- safeguarding the environment
- championing local communities
- safeguarding livelihoods and the local economy

Experience development: the curation of experiences that showcase the story of local people and across urban and rural communities across the following themes:
- culture, heritage and the arts
- food and drink
- outdoor recreation, adventure and activities

Economic development: the delivery of enterprise development supports that empower tourism businesses to make smart choices about where to invest their resources (time, human and financial) to
- maximise social and economic benefits
- benefit local livelihoods and the economy

Collaborations, relationship building and partnerships: embedding a deep-rooted, multi-layered collaborative framework between Lisburn & Castlereagh's

- tourism and hospitality business providers
- tourism industry and the local community
- tourism team with the local tourism industry and stakeholders that can support tourism development inc. Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast

Communications: creation of compelling offline and online communications that present with clarity the destination's unique story and tourism offering:

- positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination with its own character differentiated by
  - a slower pace of life, a deep sense of community, an accessible geography
  - unparalleled experiences: e.g., Royal Hillsborough, Ulster Aviation Society
  - immense natural beauty and vibrant hub communities with people who have the time to engage in conversation

- highlighting all relevant categories of tourism and hospitality business including
  - accommodation providers: e.g., hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and self-catering
  - visitor attractions: e.g., Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum
  - experience and activity providers
  - events and festivals
  - places to eat and drink
  - venues: for private and corporate occasions

Opportunities for growth

In May 2023, the World Health Organisation declared that the Covid-19 pandemic no longer represented a international health emergency. Since then, challenges continue to manifest including

- the cost-of-living crisis as a primary concern among domestic and international markets
- evidence of the erosion of Northern Ireland's value for money rating
- the trend toward last-minute booking making it more difficult to predict future performance
- limited hotel capacity, curbing the potential to increase dwell time and maximise commercial opportunities

While these challenges are significant, there is optimism regarding tourism development in Northern Ireland. The *Department for the Economy's Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan* (2024): projects an increase in the value of tourism to the Northern Ireland economy by 50% -75% compared to 2019 (growth of 4%-6% per annum). The *Tourism Ireland Marketing Plan* (2024) projects tourism revenue growth in Northern Ireland of +6.5% year-on-year to 2030.

To achieve its fair share of growth, Lisburn & Castlereagh will need to adopt a twofold approach by continuing to progress tourism infrastructural development while nurturing tourism industry and destination development.

2.2.1 Strengths and Considerations

The following chart summarises the key strengths and considerations based on the current environment that Lisburn & Castlereagh need to be aware of and address in all future activity:

Strengths

- Passionate tourism industry and communities, eager to raise the profile of their destination
- Prime eastern location with easy accessibility to Dublin and Belfast and wider exploration
- Variety of city, town, villages and hamlets, each with their own character
- Vibrant communities with a deep sense of identity across urban and rural areas
- New product development: Royal Hillsborough, Dundonald International
- Strong tourism product: golf, horse racing, visitor attractions
- Product that is unparalleled in Ireland: e.g., Royal Hillsborough, Ulster Aviation Society
- Ability to meet diverse visitor interests: culture & heritage, food and drink, adventure & activities
- Scenic beauty: home to Lagan Valley Regional Park, NI's only Regional Park
- Quality and diversity of scenery: Lough Neagh (west), hills above Dundonald (east), Belfast hills (north), River Lagan (south)
- Renowned for exceptional food and drink offering
- Year-round calendar of community, larger scale events & festivals and farmers markets
- Integrated Marketing Campaigns: raising the destinations' profile in NI and ROI
- Visit Belfast partnership: expanding the potential to target new domestic and international visitors

Considerations

- A need to position L&C as a destination with a unique identity, rather than as a suburb of Belfast
- A need to drive tourism dispersion across the destination across urban and rural areas
- While rich in tourism product, there is a lack of immersive experiences delivered by local people
- Low supply of experiences bookable by independent visitors
- A lack of accommodation to achieve dwell time and a high proportion of ungraded accommodation
- Tourism industry reporting a need for greater collaboration
- A need for LCCC's tourism team to apply a balanced approach supporting a) infrastructure development and b) the tourism industry with collaborative and economic development opportunities
- While there are champions of sustainable and accessible tourism, this is not consistent across industry
- A lack of data capture making it challenging to measure performance
- In the context of the Economic Development Efficiency Review, an opportunity to refocus LCCC's tourism team to maximise social and economic opportunities, inc. by resourcing the following functions: product & partnership development, digital marketing

2.3 The Future: Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2024-2029

Taking stock of the situational analysis and the findings summarised in the executive summary, the following is a checklist of activity that is integral to the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 so that opportunities are maximised for Lisburn & Castlereagh:

Apply a balanced approach	Adopt a twofold approach that blends a commitment to a) the development of quality tourism infrastructure and b) tourism industry and destination development
Infrastructure Development and Promotion	• Promote existing tourism infrastructure so that it benefits the local community and visitors • Successfully manage the development of projects that are underway (e.g., Royal Hillsborough) ensuring to promote these to generate benefits for the local community and visitors.
Experience Development	• Deliver enterprise development supports to curate experiences that authentically share the story of local people across urban and rural communities to meet the expectations of contemporary visitors • Ensure that these experiences are bookable by independent visitors and private bookings to maximise opportunities
Food and drink	• Continue to champion LCCC as a destination renowned for quality food and drink, places to eat and drink • Additionally, craft and promote food and drink-related experiences that allow for a deeper exploration of this priority theme
Commercial Development	Deliver enterprise development supports to maximise social and economic benefits by empowering LCCC's tourism and hospitality industry to • make strategic choices about which sales channels, markets and customer segments to engage in • master data collation and analysis to assess progress, mitigate challenges and identify opportunities
Collaborative Framework	Build a robust collaborative framework, noting that this is the foundation for all successful tourism destinations: • between Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council departments • between Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's tourism team and local tourism and hospitality providers • across Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry • between Lisburn & Castlereagh and external stakeholders that can benefit the destination including Visit Belfast, Lough Neagh Partnership, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland

Sustainable Tourism Development	• Embed an ethos of sustainable and regenerative tourism development, ensuring that this informs all activity • Apply a dual approach a) led by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland policies and b) industry-led: empowering tourism providers to adopt and promote Leave No Trace principles
Social Inclusion & accessibility	Place social inclusion at the heart of all activity and champion accessible tourism development
Invest in accommodation	Proactively seek investors to develop quality sustainable accommodation that is suited to LCCC's profile, to include luxury lodge style accommodation
Events and festivals	Continue to champion the annual community and large-scale events programme while curating a signature festival with an innovate concept and programming that can generate opportunities during the low season, potentially by expanding LCCC's Christmas markets across December and into the New Year
Investigate Tourism Potential	Work with key stakeholders to support the development of experiences that are unique in Ireland including • Royal Hillsborough • Ulster Aviation Society • EIKON exhibition centre and Maze Long Kesh • Down Royal Racecourse • Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB: jointly funded by LCCC and Belfast City Council
	Noting that Dundonald International Ice Bowl (DIIB) in its current format reads as a sports and recreational offering rather a tourism offering, assess if and how DIIB can be positioned and developed as part of LCCC's wider tourism offering
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	Continue with the management of campaigns conducted by LCCC's tourism team that have been successful in raising the district's profile and driving footfall from the NI and ROI markets
Data collation and analysis	Collate an annual report (2024-2029) so that progress is visible and measurable to include NISRA, Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland data; in-destination visitor counter data; local market research data; data collated via a survey issued to tourism businesses

Communications	• Position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a place apart with its own unique identity and character that is home to authentic and unparalleled experiences • Consider how a) LCCC can benefit from Visit Belfast's approach to "neighbourhood tourism" and b) if/how LCCC should continue to be branded by Visit Belfast under the Belfast Plus brand in the future
	Promote the tourism offering across the following categories to encompass visitor attractions, activity and experience providers, events and festivals, places to eat, drink and stay - natural assets: i.e., places of interest and natural beauty - culture and heritage - outdoor recreation, adventure and activities - food and drink experiences - events and festivals: community and large-scale events - places to eat and drink: e.g., restaurants, gastro pubs, cafes - places to stay: e.g., hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, self-catering
Be strategic	Ensure that all activity targets the opportunities that are most suited to LCCC including

Customers:	**Markets:**	**Tourism**
• individuals, groups • couples, families • inter-generational travellers • soft adventurers, golfers • enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, soft adventure and outdoor activities	• NI • ROI • North America • GB • France • Germany	Leisure tourism: a priority Luxury tourism Business tourism

Visit Belfast	Continue to partner with Visit Belfast via an agreed SLA to maximise opportunities via NI, ROI and international markets - agree metrics so that outcomes can be measured - assess the SLA after a defined period (e.g., 3-5 years) to decide how best to proceed into the future
Lough Neagh Partnership	Explore the following opportunities: • potential for new experience development • potential collaborations with LN tourism providers • how to profile LN as part of the district's tourism offering
Spread social and economic benefits	Leverage the promotion of signature attractions such as Royal Hillsborough. ensuring that this promotion maximises social and economic benefits for urban and rural communities

Address Visitor Services	**Enhance the Visitor Information Services (VIC)**
	1. **At the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum** give equal consideration to the • provision of customer-centric VIC services and • delivery of a quality visitor experience via the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum as a visitor attraction
	2. **Address the mobile Visitor Information service (trailer) currently based at Hillsborough Forest Park** • installing services such as a power point and WIFI in the trailer so that work can be conducted during quiet times • adding external communications to include QR codes, local tips and maps to maximise promotional opportunities • using the trailer as a flexible VIC in the future that can be placed anywhere in the district as required to maximise opportunities
	3. **Install a permanent Visitor Information Centre at Hillsborough Forest Park to** • service the +600,000 visitors to the park • raise awareness about the tourism offering in Royal Hillsborough and (importantly) throughout the Lisburn & Castlereagh district

	Across all Visitor Services:
	
	• **Reduce the use of print materials**
	
	• **Adopt a hybrid approach:** noting that the contemporary visitor wants to a) meet a person who can share local insights seconded by b) information provided by digital communications
	
	• **Invest in training and robust data collation** to maximise opportunities and achieve measurable success
	
	• **Think innovation:** e.g., during high demand periods
	  - extending visitor services on bike or by foot
	  - recruiting and training volunteers to support visitor services
	  - training tourism businesses (e.g., accommodation providers) to extend the work of VIC's by generating referral and packaged opportunities for the district

Refocus LCCC's tourism team	To achieve the ambition and growth target outlined in this plan, refocus LCCC's tourism team in the context of the Economic Development Efficiency Review by considering how to resource the following functions: product and partnership development, digital marketing

Action plan 2024-2029

The Action Plan in Section 3 identifies the activity that needs to be addressed to achieve the vision, ambition and growth target set out in this plan under the following five strategic pillars:

1.	Position	Position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a distinguished, sustainable and socially inclusive tourism destination
2.	Innovate	Be a frontrunner in innovation, ensuring that this is a hallmark of all activity
3.	Collaborate	Be a champion of collaboration by embedding a collaborative framework within the destination and developing strategic partnerships outside the destination
4.	Nurture	Promote Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination defined by integrity and thoughtful hospitality
5.	Grow	Support local livelihoods, economic growth and enterprise development across urban and rural areas and communities

Hinch Distillery

3. The Way Forward: Action Plan 2024-2029

The objectives and actions outlined in this plan align with the recommended twofold approach to be adopted by Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team with the support of council to maximise social and economic benefits as outlined below

1. **Infrastructural investment and development:** i.e., the curation of high-quality tangible infrastructure that has been a core responsibility for Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team over the lifetime of the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, and will remain a priority over the lifetime of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029

2. **Tourism industry and destination development:** that will be an additional core priority over the lifetime of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029

The Action Plan outlines the timebound actions to target under the following seven objectives:

1. Embed a collaborative framework in the destination
2. Invest in tourism product, new experience and events & festival development
3. Invest in enterprise development and data analysis processes
4. Invest in communications, positioning L&C as a destination with a distinct identity
5. Embed a culture of responsible tourism in all activity
6. Reimagine Visitor Services to inspire visitors
7. Work in partnership with Visit Belfast to maximise opportunities

While the plan recommends actions to address, this list is not exhaustive and will be expanded upon during the lifetime of this plan in line with industry innovations and as new initiatives and opportunities arise aligned with the ambition of this plan.

TIMING OF ACTIONS WITHIN THIS PLAN
- Immediate Term (IT): 2024 Year 1 / Y1
- Short-term (ST): 2025-2026 Years 2-3 / Y2, Y3
- Medium-term (MT): 2027-2028 Years 4-5 / Y4, Y5
- Long-term (LT): 2029 Year 6 / Y6

For each noted action the relevant strategic pillar/s that applies is indicated:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Position	Innovate	Collaborate	Nurture	Grow

While Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council will lead this plan, its success is dependent upon proactive engagement from the district's tourism industry and the support of stakeholders here noted:

Acronym	Stakeholder
AIPCO	Association of Professional Conference Organisers
AVEA	Association of Visitor Experiences and Attractions
BCC	Belfast City Council
IAAT	Ireland's Association for Adventure Tourism
IGTOA	Irish Golf Tour Operators Association
ITOA	Irish Tour Operators Association
LC	Local Chamber
LCCC	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
LCIND	Lisburn & Castlereagh tourism industry
LCCOM	Lisburn & Castlereagh communities
LNP	Lough Neagh Partnership
LNT	Leave No Trace
PS	Private Sector
TNI	Tourism Northern Ireland
TI	Tourism Ireland
VB	Visit Belfast

Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum

Embed a collaborative framework in the destination: Objective 1 / O1

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Invite industry and key stakeholders to an event to a) learn about the outcomes of this plan, b) set the context for the future and c) emphasise how collaboration will be key for success					LCCC	LCIND, TNI, TI, LNP, VB, LNP	Collaborate Nurture Grow	Min. 50 guests
1.1	Explain how this is day 1 of an annual collaborative network framework to include: A. 1 industry forum (in-person): industry / stakeholder update, speakers, networking B. 2 half day events (in-person): industry-relevant topic/s followed by networking C. One annual industry FAM Trip: this can include other stakeholders such as Visit Belfast visitor information team members D. A suite of enterprise development supports that will be scheduled to support economic growth E. Account Management: to include annual meetings with a member of the LCCC tourism team								
1.2	Explain that this collaborative framework will promote the development of connections, partnerships and information sharing a) across industry (accommodation, visitor attractions, experience/activity providers, festival organisers, places to eat, drink & socialise), b) between industry and stakeholders and c) between industry and community								
1.3	Promote the dates for all events in year one, outlining the focus topics for each year (taking inspiration from the list below)- advising industry that they are welcome to share their views on topics they would like to explore: • Sustainability and regeneration • Leave No Trace • Accessible Tourism • Sharing the story of people & place through exceptional services & compelling experiences • Tourism-relevant capital grant aid/funding • Data capture: industry and destination • Travel buyers: opportunities and needs • Engaging community in tourism • Festivals: annual calendar and new programming • Local, regional, national stakeholders: their functions, ways they can support tourism • Enterprise development: needs, maximising social & economic opportunities								
1.4	End with a networking event and meal showcasing local produce								
2	Establish the account management process a) assigning one LCCC team member to each local business, b) ensuring that each business if informed of their assigned team member and contact details, c) that an annual process is initiated whereby min. 2 meetings take place annually to catch upon on progress and needs					LCCC	LCIND	Collaborate Nurture Grow	Each tourism business is assigned one dedicated account manager
2.1	Continue this process annually								

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
3	Ensure that the role of tourism and how it aligns with community (sharing the story of people and place) is promoted throughout all communications including policies and strategies so that a) the value of tourism and how it generates social and economic benefits is valued and b) the community is encouraged to promote and support local tourism services and experiences					LCCC	LCCOM	Collaborate Nurture Grow	Encourage the local community to be champions of tourism
4	Foster a collaborative culture between LCCC tourism team and external stakeholders					LCCC		Collaborate Nurture Grow	Collaborate with stakeholders that can support the growth of tourism in L&C
4.1	Work collaboratively with Visit Belfast across to ensure that there is clarity about • the ambition and vision to position Lisburn & Castlereagh (L&C) as a renowned leading tourism destination with a unique identity and unparalleled experiences • the product offering in the L&C district and how to promote same					LCCC	VB		
4.1.1	Arrange annual meetings with Visitor Services Information teams to ensure they have up to date communications and product knowledge. Invite team members on the annual industry FAM trip								
4.2	Work collaboratively with Tourism Northern Ireland to ensure that there is clarity about the • ambition and vision to position L&C as a renowned leading tourism destination with a unique identity and unparalleled experiences • product offering in the L&C district • desire to avail of all TNI opportunities that can maximise opportunities for L&C in the domestic and international marketplace • availability of funding and enterprise development supports that can benefit L&C					LCCC	TNI		
4.3	Work collaboratively with Tourism Ireland to ensure that there is clarity about the • ambition and vision to position L&C as a renowned leading tourism destination with a unique identity and unparalleled experiences • product offering in the L&C district • desire to avail of all TNI opportunities that can maximise opportunities for L&C particularly in the GB, North American, German and French markets					LCCC	TI		
4.4	Collaborate with professional leisure tourism travel buyers that are best suited to L&C: a) introducing these buyers to L&C tourism businesses that meet their needs, b) ensuring that the buyers have a key point of contact in the LCCC tourism team, c) responding to buyer queries promptly and d) inviting buyers to attend L&C FAM trip opportunities					LCCC	TNI, TI, ITOA, IGTOA		
4.4.1	As product and opportunities for business tourism expand, engage with travel buyers that are specialists in this field – supported by guidance from national tourism bodies					LCCC	TNI, TI, AIPCO		
4.5	Collaborate with local, regional and national organisations that can support tourism development in L&C					LCCC	AVEA, IAAT		
6	Promote a collaborative culture within LCCC ensuring that a) all departments are aware of the value of tourism and b) the LCCC tourism team is made aware of funding opportunities available via other departments and other sources that can support tourism development					LCCC			Maximise opportunities within LCCC to support tourism development
6.1	To achieve the ambition set out in this plan and to maximise social and economic opportunities, refocus LCCC's tourism team within the context of the Economic Development Efficiency Review giving due consideration to resourcing the following functions and activity: product and partnership development, digital marketing								

Invest in tourism product, new experience and events & festival development: Objective 2 / O2

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Invest in the development of large-scale tourism products include **1.1** Royal Hillsborough, Hillsborough Castle & Gardens (RHHCG) **1.2** Ulster Aviation Society (UAS) **1.3** EIKON exhibition centre **1.4** Down Royal Racecourse (DRR) **1.5** Dundonald International Ice Bowl (DIIB) **1.6** Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB (LVRP) **1.7** Accommodation growth **1.8** Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum					LCCC		Position Innovate Grow	
1.1	Manage the £26 million development of Royal Hillsborough village to include a) upgrading public realm across the streetscape, square and historic Courthouse and b) upgrades at Hillsborough Castle and Gardens – enhancing and preserving this historic area and attraction for future generations					LCCC	LCIND	Position Innovate Nurture Grow	Promote RHHCG as an iconic attraction in a way that maximises social and economic opportunities across L&C
1.1.1	Raise the profile of this attraction so that it enters the league of top 10 paid visitor attractions as defined by NISRA - leveraging the attraction's potential to welcome leisure and business tourism visitors					LCCC	LCIND	Position Grow	
1.1.2	Leverage this iconic attraction to raise the profile of L&C's tourism offering across urban and rural areas to spread social and economic benefits					LCCC	LCIND, TNI, TI, VB	Position Collaborate Innovate Grow	
1.1.3	Determine the potential to curate immersive experiences (e.g., delivered by the Fort Guards) to raise the profile of this attraction and generate new opportunities for L&C					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
1.2	Ulster Aviation Society: work with the team of volunteers to position UAS as a leading visitor attraction in L&C determining the potential to a) develop bespoke immersive experiences and b) support enterprise development with training and mentoring that empowers UAS to grow leisure and business tourism opportunities					LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Innovate Grow	Support organisations with the potential to grow tourism opportunities in L&C
1.3	EIKON exhibition centre: work with the team to determine the potential to grow L&C's reputation for the delivery of exhibitions and any supports that may be required to achieve this goal such as a communications, commercial and operational plan					LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Innovate Grow	
1.4	Down Royal Racecourse: work with the team to position DRR as a compelling tourism experience determining the potential to a) develop bespoke immersive experiences (e.g., engaging a local tipster, behind the scenes experiences etc.) and b) support enterprise development with training and mentoring that empowers DRR to grow leisure and business tourism opportunities					LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Innovate Grow	

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.5	Dundonald International Ice Bowl: with the team to manage the £52 investment to include an Olympic sized ice rink, a 24-lane bowling alley and catering facilities					LCCC		Position Innovate Grow	Support DIIB to maximise opportunities and determine if DIIB is tourism-relevant
1.5.1	Achieve the target to welcome 700,000 visitors to DIIB post redevelopment, promoting this experience to the local, NI and ROI markets – embedding data collation processes so that the visitor's location/market of origin can be determined					LCCC	LCIND		
1.5.2	Determine if DIIB can be positioned as a sports and recreation offering and a viable tourism offering with the potential to attract out of state visitors					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
1.6	Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB: as two thirds of LVRP's expanse is under the jurisdiction of LCCC and one third is under the jurisdiction of Belfast City Council, consider the opportunity to work in partnership to conduct an independent study to assess the potential for tourism development to include • how the park can be positioned as a tourism asset with a sustainable and regenerative ethos at its heart • what experiences and services can be developed to meet the needs of the local community, leisure and business tourism customers in Ireland and internationally • what events can be curated • what customer segments and markets are suited to the offering • how the park generates social and economic benefits as a tourism offering • what communications are required for tourism purposes • what enterprise development supports are required to achieve success • how LVRP could be best managed via a partnership between LCCC and BCC to maximise opportunities					LCCC, BCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	Determine the opportunity for LVRP to support tourism development in L&C as NI's only National Park
1.7	Accommodation growth: create an integrated team to include LCCC's tourism team and representatives from other council departments to • define communications targeted at potential investors, emphasising an interest in sustainable development across all categories: quality hotels, guesthouses, self-catering (e.g., lodges in nature) • define if a professional needs to be engaged to support this activity					LCCC	PS	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	Achieve growth to maximise dwell time
1.7.1	Lean on the Collaborative Framework (O1) to promote opportunities along with capital grant and funding programmes among L&C tourism businesses to determine if there are interested local investors					LCCC	LCIND		
1.8	Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum: reimagine this tourism offering to increase domestic and international visitors aligned with enhancing Visitor Information Services (see O6)								
2	Deliver three separate programmes focused on the development of new (never brought to market) immersive experiences across the following theme categories: culture and heritage; outdoor recreation, adventure and activities; food and drink					LCCC	TNI, LCIND, LCCOM	Innovate Nurture Grow	

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No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
2.1	Ensure the programme approach is informed by outcomes that have emerged from this plan: • *NI destination experience branding:* experiences must align with NI's EAGS brand • *L&C branding;* experiences must align with L&C *you're welcome* brand • *Achieve geographic spread:* experience collection must represent urban and rural areas/communities • *Champion innovation:* fresh ideas/new angles that make L&C standout • *Meet the needs of independent visitors and private bookings/groups:* experiences must be bookable a) by independent visitors (online) and b) privately by groups • *Maximise economic opportunities:* the collection must represent year-round experiences; experiences that benefit the day (early morning, daytime) and evening/nighttime economy					LCCC	TNI, LCIND, LCCOM	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	*Across all 3 programmes* 15 experiences suited for sale in the international / domestic marketplace: min. 5 per theme category
2.2	Create an EOI outlining a) the programme purpose, ambition and conditions, b) sample experiences sought via the programme – emphasising the focus on <u>new</u> experience development, c) who the programme is open to community members (with no/low tourism experience) capable of delivering an experience and tourism businesses with a new idea, d) how to register for a virtual information session to find out more								
2.2.1	Promote the programme across social media channels, tourism industry and via channels open to local stakeholders connected with community								
2.2.2	Deliver a facilitated virtual information session: guiding registrants to understand the expectations and commitment required so that they can make an informed decision about whether the programme is suited to them								
2.3	Once participants are qualified, deliver the programme to include training, mentoring and market testing to verify the quality of experience delivery								
2.4	Post the programme (using acquired learnings) the participants bring their experiences for sale to the market – taking commercial responsibility for their success								
2.5	For participants ready for growth, guide/support their progression onto a) local and/or b) national programmes to expand commercial opportunities								
2.6	Embed experience providers into L&Cs annual collaborative framework								
3	Identify the concept and programming for a signature L&C event & festival, noting that this should • have the capacity to attract out of state visitors • align with a theme that is authentic to Lisburn & Castlereagh: e.g., food and drink, heritage, Christmas markets • ideally take place during the low or shoulder season to maximise economic advantages when most needed • align with TNI's definition of what constitutes a tourism event					LCCC		Position Innovate Collaborate Grow	Identify a festival with the potential to win domestic and international visitors for L&C
3.1	Lean on the collaborative network to seek the opinion of L&C industry					LCCC	LCIND		

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
3.1.2	Seek the advice of TNI to ensure that the considered concept/s are of interest and can support the growth of visitors to L&C and NI					LCCC	TNI	Position Innovate Collaborate Grow	
3.2	Once the event is identified, trial it over a defined period (e.g., 2 years) supporting its promotion and growth					LCCC	TNI, LCIND		
4	As part of this activity, determine opportunities to develop new product and experiences via the Lough Neagh Partnership					LCCC	LNP		

Invest in enterprise development and data analysis processes: Objective 3 / O3									
No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Lean on the collaborative framework (O1) to determine supports required by industry to maximise opportunities for businesses and destination L&C. These supports could include • Understanding the tourism landscape to maximise opportunities • Commercial planning across B2C and B2B sales channels • Pricing and contracting across B2C and B2B sales channels • How to align with sustainable and regenerative tourism development • How to create communications that are mindful of social inclusion • How to deliver a customer-centric experience • Mastering data collation and analysis					LCCC	LCIND	Innovate Collaborate Grow	Empower L&C's tourism industry to make strategic choices that can maximise economic opportunities and support livelihoods
1.1	Engage with TNI to determine if there are national programmes that can help support requirements or if these supports need to be delivered independently by L&C					LCCC	TNI		
1.2	Determine who should attend these supports and (depending on numbers), when these supports should roll out: for example, on an annual basis or every two years					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
1.3	Be strategic, ensuring that these supports target the opportunities best suited to L&C *Ireland:* local market, NI, ROI — *International* GB, North America, France, Germany — *Visitors* • individuals, groups • couples, families • inter-generational travellers • soft adventurers, golfers • enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, soft adventure and outdoor activities — *Opportunities:* • Leisure Tourism - a priority • Luxury Tourism • Business Tourism: for relevant businesses					LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Innovate Collaborate Grow	
1.3.1	Raise awareness of the roles of key stakeholders, ensuring that L&C's tourism industry is informed about how to maximise opportunities by leaning on their support					LCCC, LCIND	VB, TNI, TI		

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
2.	• Informed by the outcomes of this plan, create a questionnaire to capture L&C-wide data, ensuring that this includes businesses with robust and weaker data capture processes • Review the data fields that have emerged (business category, visitor numbers, markets, channels) deciding if others should be added – e.g., area (urban, rural, coastal)					LCCC	LCIND	Innovate Grow	Empower tourism businesses to a) measure growth and b) swiftly identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. Empower L&C to measure performance and to benchmark progress against the growth targets in this plan.
2.1	Decide if this activity should be conducted internally by LCCC or with the support of an independent research agency to include crafting the questionnaire, issuing this to industry, collating outcomes					LCCC	PS		
2.2	At one of the events identified under collaborative framework (O1) ensure that data capture is a theme focus, inviting an expert speaker to guide industry on this topic.					LCCC	LCIND		
2.2.1	Show industry the questionnaire intended to capture this data – advising that it has been designed to a) be as simple as possible, b) include all businesses / organisations across all sectors – including those with limited data collation processes and c) for completion on an anonymous basis – invite feedback.					LCCC	LCIND		
2.2.2	Explain the intention to create an annual performance overview collating outputs from this questionnaire and other LCCC and national sources					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
2.2.3	Advise that the aim is for this questionnaire to be completed on a quarterly basis: seeking industry feedback in this regard – making a case for this approach by explaining how this would allow for an assessment of seasonal and annual performance					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
2.2.4	Explain that the proposed data collation process is separate to other processes, emphasising the importance of responding to requests for insights/data at a national level via TNI					TNI	LCIND, LCCC		
2.3	Once the final approach is agreed, initiate the process – issuing the questionnaire and monitoring outcomes					LCCC	LCIND		
2.3.1	By Y4 – aim for this process to be embedded in the tourism culture – repeated annually thereafter					LCCC	LCIND		
2.4	Promote education and awareness - encouraging industry to understand the importance of data capture and how to master this process					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
2.4.1	For businesses that need assistance, direct them to local and national enterprise development supports that can provide them with expert guidance aligned with their capabilities					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
2.4.2	As responses to the questionnaire will determine the level of businesses with no/low/partial data collation processes, an assessment can be made about whether L&C's industry needs dedicated support to improve data collation capabilities					LCCC	LCIND		
2.5	At the annual industry forum (O1), update attendees on progress and on data capture outcomes, once available					LCCC	LCIND		
2.5.1	Ensure that other relevant insights and metrics available nationally (via TNI, TI) and to L&C (e.g., visitor engagement metrics, user engagement on L&C digital channels) are shared annually					LCCC	TNI, TI		

Invest in communications, positioning L&C as a destination with a distinct identity: Objective 4 / O4

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Across communications, position L&C as a destination with a unique identity aligned with the plan's vision statement and defined by • a slower pace and quality of life • a deep sense of community across urban and rural areas • vibrant hubs across city, town, villages and hamlets • people who take the time to welcome visitors and engage in conversation • natural beauty • rich architectural and cultural heritage • experiences that are unparalleled in Ireland, inc. Ireland's only Royal Residence • a vibrant calendar of events, festivals and farmer's markets • a prime east coast location with easy access to Belfast and Dublin • the unexpected: e.g., the opportunity to walk from Lisburn to Belfast via a towpath • a destination that champions responsible tourism					LCCC	LCIND	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	Motivate visitors to engage by positioning L&C as a destination with a compelling tourism offering and a distinct identity
2.	Ensure that communications speak to visitors who are best suited to L&C • individuals, groups, couples, families, inter-generational travellers • soft adventurers (walkers, cyclists, boaters) and golfers • enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, outdoor activities • leisure and luxury tourism • business tourism								
3.	Ensure that the full breadth of L&C's tourism offering is promoted across the following categories • natural assets: places of natural beauty across urban and rural landscapes • culture, history and heritage • outdoor recreation, adventure and activities • food and drink • events and festivals • places to eat and drink • places to stay • exclusive venues								
4.	Ensure that key stakeholders are clear on how L&C is positioned and the ask by local industry to position L&C as a unique destination with its own identity and story – ensuring that relevant stakeholder platforms are updated accordingly					LCCC	VB, TNI, TI		
5.	Align communications with regional and national branding					LCCC	LCIND		

you're welcome
Lisburn & Castlereagh

Northern Ireland Embrace a Giant Spirit

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
6	Develop itineraries that showcase how to experience L&C over diverse time periods: 24 hours, 48 hours, 72-hours, 5 days, 7 days so that the destination's compelling tourism offering, and geography is understood by visitors starting from the holiday research phase					LCCC	LCIND	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	Inspire visitors via captivating communications, emphasising the full breadth of the destination to encourage exploration
6.1	Ensure that L&C communications – inc. these itineraries – share tips from a local perspective, with insights into locally known gems and beloved spots for exploration					LCCC	LCIND, LCCOM		
7	Ensure that communications reflect the full breadth of L&C's geography across urban and rural areas: from the shores of Lough Neagh in the west to the hills above Dundonald in the east, and from the Belfast Hills in the north to the source of the River Lagan in the south					LCCC	LNP		

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Embed a culture of responsible tourism in all activity: Objective 5 / O5

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	*Sustainable and regenerative tourism:* support education and awareness, aligning activity with UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the VICE model for sustainable tourism					LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Nurture Grow	
1.1.	Use the collaborative network framework (O1) to promote education and awareness					LCCC			
1.1.1	Programme inspiring speakers (industry and stakeholders) who • *are champions of this ethos and approach:* sharing practical guidance and learnings • *can share best practice communications:* how to make sustainability visible					LCCC			
1.2	Embed Leave No Trace ethos and principles across industry - creating an industry of LNT champions through an annual education awareness training programme					LCCC	LCIND, LNT		LNT training: Y2: 2 X 15 pax: 30 in total
1.2.1	Consult with LNT to identify a suitable LNT trainer					LCCC	LNT		Y3: 3 X 15 pax: 45 in total
1.2.2	Liaise with LNT to deliver an introductory information session for the tourism industry to learn about this positive, proactive and ground-up approach before training initiates					LCCC	LNT		
1.2.3	LCCC to advise that LNT awareness training will be delivered for industry • the aim is for one team member per business to become an LNT champion – promoting the ethos across the business and wider L&C community • commitment: training takes place over one day in an indoor/outdoor location (6hr period) • process: invitation extended via email with places filled on a first come first serve basis					LCCC	LCIND, LNT		Y4: 2 2 X 15 pax: 30 in total Y5: 1 X 15 pax: 15 in total Y6: 1 X 15 pax: 15 in total
1.2.4	• Deliver LNT training • Collate feedback via evaluation forms to gauge satisfaction and gain learnings					LNT	LCCC		
1.3	Make sustainability visible across L&C and industry tourism channels					LCCC	LCIND		By Y6: 135 LNT champions
1.3.1	Add compelling sustainable tourism communications across the Visit Lisburn & Castlereagh website: refreshing content with new updates on an annual basis					LCCC			
1.3.2	Identify L&C champions of sustainable and regenerative tourism - promote their practices, experiences and stories through LCCC channels					LCCC	LCIND		

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.4	Deliver industry-wide training on how to craft effective and compelling communications online and offline: inc. sustainability pledge, policy, core values, customer/visitor tips					LCCC	LCIND	Position Nurture Grow	
1.5	Encourage industry to engage with national Climate Action programmes and initiatives					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
1.6	Promote sustainable travel solutions and opportunities to explore L&C sustainably inc. on foot and by bicycle					LCCC	LCIND		
2	*Accessible tourism development and social inclusion*: promote education and awareness across industry: what is meant by accessible tourism, who is the accessible tourism visitor, why is this market important, what are the needs and how can these be addressed					LCCC	LCIND		By Y3, succeed in embedding an industry-wide understanding
2.1	Promote awareness of section 75 of the Northern Ireland Equality Act and its role in tourism businesses					LCCC	LCIND		
3	Use the collaborative network framework (O1) to promote education and awareness					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
3.1	Programme inspiring speakers (industry and stakeholders) who ● *are champions of this ethos and approach:* sharing practical guidance and learnings ● *can share best practice communications:* how to guide accessible tourism visitors; how to share this ethos / approach online and offline ● *have experience of accessible design:* a) Universal Design and b) no / low-cost ideas solutions					LCCC			
3.2	Make accessibility visible across L&C and industry tourism channels					LCCC	LCIND		
3.3	Include communications across the Visit Lisburn & Castlereagh website: refreshing content with new updates on an annual basis					LCCC	LCIND		
3.4	Identify L&C champions of accessible tourism development - promote their practices, experiences and stories through L&C channels								
3.5	Deliver industry-wide training on how to craft accessible communications: inc. how to communicate when an environment is/is not accessible – providing clear/thoughtful guidance so visitors can make informed decisions					LCCC	LCIND		
4	Support the needs of non-English speakers translating content where possible for key markets (Germany and France) – leaning on the convenience of QR code					LCCC	LCIND		

Reimagine Visitor Services to inspire visitors: Objective 6 / O6

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Scope the potential to fund the enhancement of the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum to include a) improving visitor services, b) addressing the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum so that it becomes a leading attraction and c) determining other services (e.g., community services) that can be located here.					LCCC		Position Innovate Grow	
1.1	*Improve Visitor Services:* consider the outcomes in this plan inc. a) moving the welcome desk to greet visitors upon arrival, b) installing large screens with rolling content to promote L&C and occupy the visitor during high demand periods, c) installing compelling window displays that promote L&C and inspire the visitor, d) installing compelling communications inc. QR codes and photographable content, e) addressing shelving – ensuring that the entire space is well laid out, visually pleasing and uncluttered					LCCC			Reimagine the VIC, Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum to maximise social and economic opportunities
1.2	*Address the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum so that it becomes a leading attraction:* develop a masterplan so that a) L&C's heritage and expertise in fine linen making is celebrated and preserved for future generations and b) this tourism offering can achieve growth across domestic and international markets, generating social and economic benefits					LCCC			
1.3	*Determine other services that can be positioned here:* such as City Centre Management and Community Services – ensuring that these services are positioned in a way that is mindful of a) growing tourism and b) inspiring and providing clarity for visitors who are specifically interested in tourism services					LCCC			
2	Address the mobile Visitor Information Service (trailer) currently located at Hillsborough Forest a) ensuring that the trailer is equipped to optimise staff productivity, b) adding compelling communications to the exterior and c) determining how this trailer can be used as a mobile service that benefits all communities in L&C on the basis that a permanent VIC is installed at Hillsborough Forest					LCCC			Address the mobile VIC to maximise productivity and inspire visitors to explore the full breadth of L&C's geography.

Develop a fixed VIC at HF to service 600,000 visitors |
2.1	*Ensure that the trailer is equipped to optimise staff productivity:* install a power point and WIFI so that work (e.g., social media management) can be conducted during quiet times					LCCC			
2.2	*Add compelling communications to the exterior:* branding and compelling content (QR codes, local tips, maps) to inspire visitors during open and closing hours					LCCC			
2.3	*Determine how this trailer can be used as a mobile service:* decide if a) the mobile VIC can be retained as a flexible option that can be positioned throughout the destination on the basis that b) a permanent VIC can be installed at Hillsborough Forest (HF) to service the 600,000 annual visitors at this site					LCCC			
3	Scope the potential to develop a permanent VIC at Hillsborough Forest (HF)					LCCC			
4	Minimise paper communications at all VICs: a) conduct a monthly audit to ensure that only essential paper communications are stocked and b) engaged with suppliers to encourage the					LCCC			Champion sustainability

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
5	Ensure that services champion a hybrid model: combining human interaction with the convenience of digital supports	▓	▓			LCCC		Position Innovate Grow	Invest in VIC training to maximise opportunities for L&C, ensuring that performance is tracked to measure outcomes.
5.1	Invest in training so that VIC staff are equipped to meet visitor needs to maximise promotional and economic opportunities for L&C. Ensure that this training includes • guiding visitors about making strong choices based on their unique needs and interests • how to promote L&C's unique identity and unparalleled experiences • how to make recommendations to spread economic advantage across large- and small-scale experiences throughout L&C • how to guide the visitor to behave responsibly while in the destination	▓	▓	▓					
5.2	To maximise opportunities via digital channels, invest in a dedicated digital marketing resource that is key for optimising opportunities for L&C's industry and economy.	▓	▓						
5.3	To ensure that the VIC achieves a strong return on investment, determine KPIs against which performance can be measured to include tracking the • number of annual visitor engagements • revenue generated via bookings • spread of revenue generated across the destination • number of bookings achieved offline versus online • increase in followers via social media channels • digital analytics Ensure that this data is recorded via a quarterly summary report so that strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats can be swiftly addressed	▓	▓						
6	Collaborate with other VICs (inc. Visit Belfast) on a consistent basis to ensure that L&C is top on referral list to maximise economic opportunities		▓	▓		LCCC	VB		Collaborate to maximise opportunities for L&C
7	Encourage the VIC to work closely with local tourism businesses that interface with visitors to maximise referral opportunities. Ensure that the VIC team attends annual networking events to build relationships.		▓	▓		LCCC	LCIND		
8	Particularly during high demand periods, consider the benefit of investing in flexible visitor information services delivered (e.g.,) on a branded destination bike or by foot • assess costs and who should deliver this service: e.g., a VIC staff member or community representative • provide relevant supports according to the chosen solution		▓	▓		LCCC	LCCOM		Be creative by considering a) flexible VIC services and b) including community in the delivery of VIC services
9	Consider the benefits of widening VIC services by including non-tourism businesses (e.g., newsagents), working with providers that are relevant for this initiative to • promote L&C's tourism offering to the local community and visitors • display tourism-relevant communications: e.g., QR codes and photographable maps		▓	▓		LCCC	LCCOM		

Work in partnership with Visit Belfast to maximise opportunities: Objective 7 / O7

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Create a revised SLA with Visit Belfast over a mutually agreed duration of between 3 and 5 years	▓				LCCC	VB	Position Innovate Collaborate Grow	Create a clearly define SLA so that responsibilities and metrics are pre-determined to maximise opportunities
1.1.	Ensure that this SLA clearly defines • the objectives, actions and KPIs that Visit Belfast is responsible for achieving on behalf of LCCC: including the baselines and metrics against which progress can be measured • commitments that LCCC is responsible for	▓	▓						
1.2	As part of the SLA, define • how L&C should be positioned via communications • how L&C can benefit from Visit Belfast's approach to "neighbourhood tourism" • if L&C should continue to be promoted under the Belfast Plus model or via another mechanism • the opportunities that Visit Belfast commits to target on behalf of L&C e.g., B2C, B2B, leisure and business tourism opportunities in Ireland and internationally • the channels, markets and customer segments that Visit Belfast commits to target on behalf of L&C across online and offline opportunities • all benefits that Visit Belfast can bring to L&C such as referral opportunities via Visit Belfast's VICs and tourism providers located in Belfast	▓							
1.3	Agree a process for reviewing the SLA and associated activity and metrics: e.g., quarterly, annually			▓					
1.4	Before embarking on a new SLA, decide if any amendments are required for this agreement			▓					
2	Ensure that there is clarity about how opportunities can be maximised via a dual approach via activity conducted by a) LCCC's tourism team and b) LCCC's tourism team in collaboration with Visit Belfast	▓	▓	▓		LCCC	VB		

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
2.1	Noting that LCCC's tourism team is responsible for targeting leisure tourism in the NI and ROI marketplaces, ensure that targeted Integrated Marketing Campaigns are conducted to maximise promotional and commercial opportunities via visitors across local, national and ROI markets: • individuals, groups, couples, families, inter-generational travellers • soft adventurers (walkers, cyclists, boaters) and golfers • enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, outdoor activities • leisure and luxury tourism					LCCC			Target opportunities in a targeted, goal-focused and solution driven manner to maximise opportunities
2.2	Noting that Visit Belfast is responsible for targeting the NI, ROI and international marketplaces, work with VB to maximise B2C promotional and commercial opportunities via leisure visitors across local, national and ROI and priority markets (North America, Great Britain, France and Germany)					LCCC	VB		
2.3	Work with Visit Belfast to maximise B2B promotional and commercial opportunities via leisure tourism professional travel buyers to grow international opportunities					LCCC	VB		
2.3.1	Proactively target B2B opportunities by developing relationships with professional travel buyers and inviting buyers that are best suited to L&C on FAM trips					LCCC	VB, TNI		
2.4	Work with Visit Belfast to maximise promotional and commercial opportunities for business tourism inc. via B2B professional travel buyers					LCCC	VB		
2.4.1	Proactively target B2B opportunities by developing relationships with professional travel buyers and inviting buyers that are best suited to L&C on FAM trips					LCCC	VB, TNI		
2.4.2	Raise the profile of L&C's business tourism offering among local non-tourism businesses to encourage bookings from the local marketplace					LCCC, LCIND	LC		
3	Work closely with Visit Belfast and national tourism agencies so that they can support L&C to grow targeted opportunities					LCCC	VB, TNI, TI		

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: Examples of successful Tourism Events in Ireland

Name	Location	Dates	Concept
Tradfest	Temple Bar, Dublin	January	A joyful celebration of Irish music and culture. Experience live music in the best pubs and music venues
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival	Belfast	April/May	An annual festival of music, comedy, theatre, art and literature over an 11-day extravaganza with +100 events across +20 venues.
Listowel Writers Festival	Kerry	May/June	An internationally acclaimed literary festival devoted to bringing writers and audiences to innovative events in the historic and intimate surroundings of Listowel.
Féile an Phobail	Belfast	August	Ireland's biggest community arts festival provides a programme of inclusive arts, cultural and community-based activities throughout the year, with its flagship festival, the August Féile a calendar highlight.
Open House Festival Bangor	Bangor	August	A festival that believes that music, art and culture are the regenerative force that will transform Bangor from its seafront dereliction and failed retail sector into a modern, progressive seaside town.
Galway International Oyster & Seafood Festival	Galway	September	The oldest oyster festival in the world. Deemed one of Europe's longest running food extravaganzas, sampling the renowned native Galway Oysters is a key highlight.

Name	Location	Dates	Concept
Kilkenny Animated	Kilkenny	September/ October	A feast of visual storytelling, incorporating cartoons, animation and illustration set against the backdrop of Kilkenny's medieval streets. Hosted by four times Academy Award nominated animation studio, Cartoon Saloon.
Puca Festival	Boyne Valley	October	Celebrate the Celtic New Year with the Spirits of Halloween
Derry Halloween	Derry	October	A Samhain gathering, with ancient spirits welcoming you to join an awakening
Mayo Dark Sky Reserve Festival	Mayo	November	Celebrate all facets of Mayo's natural dark skies by joining the communities around the gold tier accredited Dark Sky Park – Newport, Mulranny and Ballycroy.

Appendix 2: Tourism Northern Ireland: funding model for events

The two funds available for events via Tourism Northern Ireland are

i. **National tourism events sponsorship scheme:** tiered awards include the potential to gain
   - Tier 1: £30,000
   - Tier 2: £20,000
   - Tier 3: £10,000

Tourism Northern Ireland publishes the criteria annually to apply for this funding which includes

- The event must achieve a minimum of 1,000 in-person visitors
- A strong marketing plan that clearly demonstrates how the event can win external visitors, including from markets such as the Republic of Ireland
- Showing how the noted event can generate a demonstrated income of £50,000 for Lisburn & Castlereagh
- Noting that low season events are of significant interest

ii. **International tourism events fund:** while there is the potential for awards between £30,000 and £150,000, the threshold for achieving these awards is much higher
   - For example, a demonstrated income of £150,000 must be shown and the event must achieve a minimum of 5,000 in-person visitors

NOTE: these models are subject to change